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HISTORICAL SERIES

*Translated from "Vie des
Dames, illustres françoises et
etrangeres," by the Seigneur
de Brantôme.*

FAMOUS WOMEN

BY

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LONDON

ARTHUR L. HUMPHREYS

1908

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FAMOUS WOMEN

CHAPTER I

ANNE OF BRITTANY

It is true I am about to write of famous women, but it is by no means my intention to speak of those who earned their fame in days of old; their tale has already been told, and it were but idle waste of time to repeat it, for has not the great Boccaccio himself written a fine book, in which he deals solely with the noble and illustrious women of old. I shall therefore confine myself to the women of France, of our own or our fathers' day, of whom but little has hitherto been recounted.

I begin with Anne of Brittany, the greatest and most honoured queen that France has known since the days of good Queen Blanche, famous for her virtue and her wisdom, mother of the sainted King Louis.

Anne was the wealthy heiress of the duchy of Brittany, said to be one of the finest in Christendom, and consequently she was much sought after, even by the highest in the land. His Grace the Duke of Orleans, who afterwards became King Louis XII., was greatly taken with her when he

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was a young man, and it was for her sake that he performed many notable feats of arms in Brittany, and especially at the battle of Saint-Aubin, in which he was taken prisoner while fighting on foot at the head of his army. I have heard it said that he was only prevented by the fortune of war from marrying her then and there; certain it is that, while he was in captivity, Anne was sought and won by Maximilian, Duke, and afterwards Emperor, of Austria, who took her at the hands of her uncle, the Prince of Orange, and married her in the great church of Nantes. But not long afterwards King Charles VIII., having been persuaded by his Council that it was not safe to allow so powerful a noble to encroach upon his kingdom, put away his own wife, Margaret of Flanders, and, without offering him any redress, took Anne away from Maximilian and married her; nor were there wanting those who saw in this marriage an evil omen, and prophesied that it would go badly with the issue, if any came thereof.

If she was desired for the sake of her wealth, it is no less true to say that Anne was equally desired for her virtues and her beauty; for she was a lovely and an amiable woman, as I have been told by the older among my friends, who have seen her, and as indeed is shown in her portrait, which I have myself seen. Her features bore a strong resemblance to those of the beautiful Demoiselle de Châteauneuf, so famous at Court for her beauty; and this fact alone fully justifies those who claim for Anne great beauty of person.

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She was of medium height and well proportioned. It is true that one of her feet was shorter by a very little than the other, but it was seldom perceived—only, in fact, with difficulty recognisable: her beauty was in no way impaired by this slight deformity; I have myself known many surpassingly beautiful women who suffered from this defect, whose beauty was unquestioned, in proof of which I have only to mention Madame la Princesse de Condé, of the great house of Longueville.

So much for the outward beauty of our Queen; in character she was no less exceptional, for she was of disposition wise, virtuous and honest, kind and gracious in her mien and possessed of a keen intellect. She was brought up under the care of Madame de Laval, a very clever and accomplished lady, who had been chosen by Duke Francis, her father, as her governess. The Queen was, moreover, a good woman, much given to works of charity, with a heart easily moved to compassion. It may be that she was quick to revenge an insult, and slow to pardon when she had taken offence, as is shown in the case of the affront put upon her by the Maréchal de Gié, when her lord and master King Louis was lying so dangerously ill at Blois that he was not expected to recover. For the Queen, wishing to provide for the future, in the event of her becoming a widow, ordered some four barges to be floated on the river Loire and laden with her most precious jewels and trinkets, her furniture and all her silver, ready to set sail for her own town and château of Nantes.

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But the aforesaid Maréchal, encountering the vessels between Saumur and Nantes, caused them and all that was in them to be seized, being ever a zealous servant of the Crown, and eager to serve his master's interests. Fate willed that the King, through the intercession of the prayers of his people, whose father he was in very truth, should on this occasion escape the danger in which he had lain.

The Queen, offended at this officious act, was not long in revenging herself upon de Gié, and before many months had elapsed he was driven from the Court. The Maréchal had at this time just completed the building of a noble mansion, and, on his retirement, was heard to remark that he must consider himself fortunate that his house was just finished before he was caught in the rain. But his punishment did not stop at banishment from the Court, for the Queen caused a careful inquiry to be made into his actions in the past, and it was discovered that he had been guilty of bribery and peculation (as what governor is not?). His case was laid before the ancient Parliament of Toulouse, the most just and equitable and least corrupt of them all; and they, having duly considered the matter, gave judgment against him. But the Queen had no wish for him to die, inasmuch as death, said she, is the remedy for all our ills, and the wretched man, when dead, would be happy once more; it was her wish that he should live, as poor and miserable as he had once been great, so that, in his changed fortunes, he might be the victim of squalor, pain and wretchedness, and a prey to ills

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far more harassing than death itself; for in a single day he might be dead, nay, even in an hour, while in poverty and misery he might die every day of the life still left to him.

Such was this good Queen's vengeance. One day she was sore vexed by M. d'Orléans, and her anger reached such a pitch that nothing could appease it. For at this time occurred the sad death of her son, the Dauphin, and King Charles, her husband, and she herself were so prostrated by grief that the doctors, knowing the weakness and lassitude of the King at all times, feared lest his sorrow might prove permanently prejudicial to his health; they therefore advised him to endeavour to rouse himself and take some interest in life, and the princes of the Court were besought to invent new pastimes, games, dances and mummeries, in order to divert the King and Queen. It was M. d'Orléans who undertook the task of enlivening the Court and he arranged a masquerade, followed by a dance, at the château of Amboise, in which he himself acted so boisterously, and danced so vigorously (as it is said and as, indeed, one reads) that the Queen, suspecting that a part at least of his gaiety was due to the thought that he considered himself more likely to become King of France now that the Dauphin was dead, took his behaviour so extremely ill that he was compelled to leave Amboise, where the Court then lay, with what speed he could, and betake himself to his château of Blois.

We have no fault to lay to the charge of this queen but that of a too revengeful disposition—

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if, indeed, that be a fault—for otherwise was she a gentle lady, sweet and lovable.

When the King her husband went on a visit to his kingdom of Naples, the Queen, with the help of those whom he had left behind him to assist her, governed France with admirable skill; young as she was, she was always careful to uphold her dignity, rank and greatness, careful, too, to see that she was obeyed; nor can we, in this, see anything to take exception to.

Bitterly did she regret the death of King Charles, for she had loved him well. Having no children living, she could not look even to fill the place of Queen-Mother. And when certain of the most intimate ladies of her Court (as I have learnt from a very trustworthy source) were grieving at the widowhood of her who had been consort to so great a king, and deploring the obstacle in the way of her returning to her former high estate (for King Louis was already married to Jeanne of France), she replied that she would rather remain all her life the widow of a king than lower herself by marrying with one less than king; but at the same time she did not greatly despair, for she felt that if she would she might one day again be a reigning queen of France, as she had been so short a time before. It was the tender recollection of former days that led her to speak thus, and the words, even as she uttered them, seemed to awaken fresh hope in her bosom. She proved herself a true prophetess, for King Louis repudiated his wife, Jeanne, and, remembering the love he had once

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borne Queen Anne, the flame of which burned no less strongly than of yore, took her in marriage and made her his queen. Well had she understood the character of King Louis, and accurately had she gauged his passion, for he, when but M. d'Orléans, had ever looked favourably upon her, even though married to another; hard it is to extinguish a fire that has once burned brightly in the heart of man. Louis was indeed a noble prince, with many amiable traits. Seeing that he was King when he married her, he lost no time in honouring her in every imaginable way; leaving her full enjoyment of her property and her duchy, of the revenues of which he never, during his lifetime, touched a penny. She was herself of a generous disposition, and made good use of her great wealth. And as the King was not able to make many gifts, without burdening the people with taxes, a thing which he was loth to do, she made up for her husband's deficiencies by drawing upon her own ample store: there was no distinguished officer in the King's service but she gave him a pension, and there was no journey on which she went but she made lavish presents on the way, either of silver or of great chains of gold; and her humbler subjects, too, she benefited in a similar manner, each according to his merits. All ran to her in their distress, and few were sent away unsatisfied. She had the reputation of being especially good to her domestics, whom she befriended until the end of her life.

It was Queen Anne who first instituted the High

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Court of Ladies, which has been in existence ever since; she had a very large suite and never refused to admit any young girl of noble family who presented herself; she would even inquire of the gentlemen of the Court whether they had daughters, and if so, who they were and whether they might be brought to her. I myself had an aunt, of Bourdeille, who had the honour of serving her Majesty, but she died at the age of fifteen and was buried behind the high altar of the Cordeliers, at Paris; the church has since been burnt down, but I saw her tomb and epitaph before it was destroyed.

The Court of Queen Anne was a splendid school for young girls, for she had them well brought up and very wisely educated; all were taught to fashion themselves after her model, as virtuous and modest maidens. No sooner had she established her High Court than she asked if she might have her own guards, and instituted the second band of 'hundred gentlemen'; up to then there had existed apparently only one company: the greater part of this guard was composed of men of Brittany, whose duty it was, when she came from her room, either to attend Mass or to take a walk, to await her coming on that little terrace of Blois, which is called to this day the *Perche aux Bretons*; it was the Queen who gave it the name. When she caught sight of them, she would cry: 'Behold my men of Brittany, waiting for me on the *Perche*.'

We may indeed feel certain that she did not hoard her riches for the use of a future generation, but spent them day by day upon good and noble works.

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It was she, too, who built that proud ship, *Corde-lière*, with its massive wooden sides and decks, that made so furious an attack upon the English *Queen Regent*, and laid such violent hands upon the good ship that she herself caught fire and was burnt; all her men perished with her, so that none were left to tell the tale. It is said that the Queen was greatly grieved to hear of the loss of her battleship.

In such honour was she held by the King, that when it came to his ears that the clerks of the Basoche, together with some young scholars, had acted a play in which allusion was made to the King, his Court and his nobles, he paid no heed whatever, other than to remark that young men must spend their time somehow, and that he permitted them, indeed, to speak of him and of his Court, always provided that they used the respect due to their persons, but on no account whatever were they to speak of the Queen, in any terms; if they did so, he would hang them all—so great was his esteem for her.

Moreover, there never came foreign prince or ambassador to his Court but he sent them, after having received them himself, and having heard what they had to say, to make their obeisance before the Queen; for it was ever his desire that they should show no less respect to her than to himself; he was well aware that she knew well how to entertain his great visitors, and put them at their ease, and that she took great pleasure in doing so, receiving them gracefully and elegantly and conversing with great eloquence and spirit. Sometimes, when she was

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especially desirous of calling forth admiration, she would introduce into the conversation one or two foreign words, for which she was indebted to M. de Grignaux, her first gentleman-usher, a gallant courtier who had seen a great deal of the world, and could speak fluently in many tongues; he was very good company, and few could tell a better tale. One day, on his being asked by the Queen for a few words in Spanish to say to the Spanish Ambassador, he repeated, laughingly, some ribald words, which she was not long in learning. On the next day, while awaiting the arrival of the Ambassador, M. de Grignaux told the story to the King, feeling sure that he would be amused; the King, indeed, enjoyed it so much that he went and told the Queen, warning her at the same time not to repeat the words M. de Grignaux had taught her. The Queen, however, did not share the King's amusement, but fell into a great rage at the joke that had been played upon her, and threatened to banish the usher from her Court; for several days she refused to see him, until M. de Grignaux made a very humble apology, assuring her that his intention had been but to amuse and entertain the King and that he would never have gone so far as to allow her actually to repeat the words, intending to warn her himself or to leave it to the King, as in the end he had done, before the Ambassador himself should appear. In the end, through the intercession of the King, she brought herself to pardon him.

Now if, as we have seen, the King loved and honoured her during her lifetime, after her death

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his love was no less ardent. As a proof of how deeply he mourned her loss, we have the superb funeral ceremonies which he arranged in her honour; of these I chanced one day to come across a description in an ancient history of France which I found in one of the cupboards of our house. As I think it a matter of some interest, I have decided to copy the description word for word from the book, without altering anything, for although the book is an old one the writing is none so bad but it will bear repetition. The truth of what it says is confirmed by the account given by my grandmother, Madame la Seneschale de Poitou, of the Maison du Lude, who was at that time at Court.

‘This queen was an honourable and virtuous lady, very good and kind withal, a true mother of the poor, the champion of her knights, the shepherdess of all honest maidens who flocked to her Court and the patron of all the wise scholars of her day. The people of France had good cause to deplore and lament her death.

‘She breathed her last at the château of Blois, on the 21st of January 1513, having witnessed but a very short time before the fulfilment of one of her dearest wishes, the union of her lord the King with the Pope and the Church of Rome. Schism and a divided country were hateful to her, and she never ceased in her endeavours to bring the King into the Catholic fold; for which reason Catholic prince and prelate loved her well, as well, indeed, as they hated the King.

‘I have seen at Saint-Denys a wonderful cope, all

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covered with pearls and embroidery, which she had ordered to be made expressly as a present for his Holiness the Pope, but died before it was completed. After her demise, her body lay in her chamber for the space of three days, the face quite uncovered. The devastating hand of death had in her case left no hideous mark, for she looked, as she lay there, as fair as she had in life.

‘Twelve tall white wax candles were placed round the body, and kept alight until such time as she was taken and embalmed and lain in a handsome coffin, which was then placed in the great hall for several days more, lit still with candles and torches, with a number of priests standing round it to keep watch and ward over the royal remains.

‘On Friday, the 27th of January, her body was removed from the castle, borne by carriers clad in the deepest mourning, by the side of whom walked four and twenty officers in the service of the deceased, bearing four and twenty torches, greater than any that had surrounded the coffin within doors. And with the body went all the priests and religious men of the city, reverend lords and prelates, bishops, abbots, and, lastly, M. le Cardinal de Luxembourg himself, to whom it was given to perform the ceremony.

‘The body of the Queen, followed by all her ladies and gentlemen, and all the principal nobles of the land, was borne into the church of Saint-Sauveur; and after it had been set down, there was not one of all the company but remained standing until the order was given by the masters of the ceremony

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for him to be seated. On the next day, which was Saturday, a solemn service was held; almost all were present and several prelates took part.

‘After the service, all went and dined; and then the body was taken out of the town with all the pomp and ceremony that had accompanied it to the church, and borne to the place of burial appointed by the King. Every night vigils were kept with due solemnity, and every day, in all the towns and places through which the body passed, High Mass was celebrated, and at length, on Septuagesima Sunday, 12th February, the procession of mourners arrived at the church of Notre Dame. The body was set down in the church, and throughout the length of two successive nights, in the light of a great number of candles kept constantly burning, vigil was kept over it. The service was fixed for the following Tuesday, and during the Monday procession followed procession from all the churches and religious houses in Paris, the members of the various orders each bearing their respective crosses before them as they went. Immediately in front of the body, as it was borne through the Port de Saint-Jacques, into Paris, went the pages of honour, bareheaded, clad in deepest mourning of black velvet, and mounted upon steeds draped in velvet hangings reaching to the ground and richly embroidered with crosses in white satin; and next to them, a noble charger, similarly accoutred, led by a groom, and the chariot in which the Queen was accustomed to drive in the streets of Paris, drawn by six horses also covered with rich black velvet

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embroidered with white ; the chariot, too, was completely covered with a cloth of black velvet, of which the four corners were carried by four noble lords.

‘An effigy of the Queen was laid upon the coffin and borne by a company of gentlemen upon a litter of wood covered in cloth of gold, edged with broad bands of ermine. The effigy itself was also draped in cloth of gold, over which was folded a great purple velvet cloak, trimmed with ermine ; a crown resting upon a golden cushion lay above the head, and in the right hand was placed a sceptre, in the left an emblem of justice. Above the whole was a rich blue canopy supported on poles at the four corners, embroidered with the arms of France and Brittany, and borne by the four presidents of the High Court of Parliament. On the Tuesday, the 15th of February, the body was again carried out of Paris for burial in the holy church of Saint-Denys ; and the processions accompanied the body as far as a cross which stands but a short distance from Paris, not far from the place where the famous fair of Landit is held.

‘Near the cross were waiting the reverend Abbé of Saint-Denys, together with all his priests, to receive the body of the said Queen and conduct it as far as the church of Saint-Denys, the goodly company of noble lords and ladies still following.

‘High Mass for the soul of the late Queen was performed by the Cardinal du Mans, the offices of deacon and sub-deacon being filled by the Archbishops of Lyons and Sens, assisted by the Abbés of Sainte-Genevière and Saint-Magloire. After

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the service the King's venerable confessor, Maître Parvy, preached an impressive sermon. These ceremonies having been duly performed, the body of the Lady Anne, in her life most noble Queen of France, Duchess of Brittany and Countess of Etampes, was with all honour laid within the sepulchre which had been prepared for it.

'Afterwards the Herald called upon all the princes and all the officers of the said lady, and all the ladies and gentlemen of her Court, to perform their offices towards their late mistress. This they proceeded to do, one and all giving way to their grief and shedding bitter tears of regret at their loss. Then the said Herald, in a loud voice, proclaimed three times: "The Most Christian Queen of France, Duchess of Brittany, Our Sovereign Lady, is dead!" and after that, all the company withdrew from the tomb.

'In such wise was she honoured, both during her lifetime and after her death: being, as I have said, a true mother of the poor, the champion of her knights, the shepherdess of all honest maidens who flocked to her Court and the patron of the wise scholars of her day. To speak of her after her death was but to renew the grief which all whom she had befriended had felt so keenly when they lost her; to her household, too, she had been especially dear. She always had been a devout and religious-minded woman. It was she who established the *Bons-Hommes*, a body of monks known later as the Minims; she built the great church of the Minims, in the neighbourhood of Paris, and,

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later, another, even more magnificent, in the neighbourhood of Rome.'

Such is the account of the superb obsequies of this queen; the funeral ceremonies of our kings that I have myself seen were no finer, not even that of Charles IX., at which I was present, and which the Queen his mother was anxious to celebrate with as much splendour and magnificence as the somewhat straitened finances of her country would allow. Indeed I find that, with the exception of three things, the two ceremonies were exactly alike. In the first place, that of Queen Anne was more superb; in the second, everything was so well ordered that there were no signs of disputation as to precedence nor of any wrangling among the mourners, as indeed did appear at the burial of King Charles; for, when, at his funeral, the body was about to be removed from Notre Dame, the High Court of Parliament thought to take precedence over the nobility and the clergy, claiming that it was their right, in the absence of the King, to take his place: whereupon a certain great princess, who is well known to me, but whom I prefer not to name, arose and said: 'It is indeed not to be marvelled at that during the King's lifetime strife and sedition were so rife in the land, seeing that now when he lies dead, men still quarrel and fight with one another, even in the presence of his corpse.' Alas! ill-fated prince! whether alive or dead, it was no fault of his. There is no uncertainty as to who have been the authors of sedition and the originators of our civil

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wars; and this princess herself, who used such hasty words in their presence, had, later, good reason bitterly to regret that she had ever uttered them.

In the third and last place, the body of King Charles, after it had been brought to the church of Saint-Lazare, was abandoned by all the mourners, whether princes, lords, members of parliament, clergy or townspeople, and none stayed by it but poor M. de Strozzy, M. de Fumel and myself, with two other gentlemen of the bedchamber, who were determined never to leave our master so long as he remained above ground. Later in the day, about eight o'clock on a July evening, the body and effigy were borne by a mere handful of retainers, followed by our miserable little party of five mourners, until we came to the Cross, where we were met by the clergy of the church of Saint-Denys, who were awaiting our arrival; and, after the ceremonies due to the august dead had been performed, the body was taken with all honour to Saint-Denys, where the great Cardinal de Lorraine, who knew so well how to act at such a time, received it with every mark of devotion and piety.

The Queen was greatly enraged when she heard that the whole of the great company of mourners had not followed their master, as indeed she had intended that they should, with the exception only of Monsieur her son and the King of Navarre, both of whom she was holding prisoner. On the following day, however, not one of the company failed to present himself at the solemn service held

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in honour of the dead. Surely that must have been in itself a pitiable sight, seeing how they had neglected the body the day before.

After dinner, the High Court of Parliament summoned the Grand Almoner Amyot to come and say grace for them, as he would have done for the King; but he sent back word that he would do nothing of the sort, adding that it was not for them that he was ever meant to say grace. Parliament sent him two threatening messages in succession, but he returned no word of reply to either, and went and hid himself so that he might not hear their further requests: they, on the other hand, swore that they would not leave the table until he came to them, but, since he could not be found, they were at length constrained to say their own grace and break up the feast, not, however, without the most violent threats of vengeance on the poor Almoner, whom they loaded with all manner of scurrilous epithets, even going so far as to call him a rascally son of a butcher. I was myself a witness of the whole scene, and well can I remember what Monsieur commanded me to say to the Cardinal in the hopes of pacifying the tumult; the parliamentarians had requested Monsieur, as the King's representative, to send the Grand Almoner to them—but he was nowhere to be found! The Cardinal went and consulted with them, but to no advantage, for they kept steadfastly to the idea that they stood for the King and were, for the time being, endowed with a king's majesty and a king's authority. I remember too the Cardinal's saying

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to me, that they were a pack of fools! President de Thou was at that time the head of the Parliament, a wise and great senator, in truth, but on the day in question he was sadly out of temper. This was only another instance of the turmoil that seemed part of the unfortunate King Charles' heritage, justifying the remark of the aforesaid princess, and indeed of many others, that this prince, whether alive or dead, above ground or below, stirred up the evil feelings of his people and sowed the seeds of sedition among them. Alas! it was no fault of his.

I have recounted this incident, perhaps at greater length than was strictly necessary (for which I stand reprov'd) because it came into my mind, and I wrote as my memory prompted me to write. It seems to me to be sufficiently to the point to be worth recording, and I should be sorry, seeing that it is in itself an incident of no little interest, if I had forgotten to relate it.

To return to Queen Anne; it would appear, from the grandeur of her funeral ceremony, that she had been well loved by her people. Her funeral was in striking contrast to that of the haughty Queen Isabel of Bavaria, wife of the late King Charles VI., who died at Paris, and for whom so little respect was felt that her body was brought from the house and placed in a little boat upon the river Seine, without form or ceremony of any kind, after having been carried through a little postern, so narrow that only with great difficulty could it be got through at all. In this way it was borne along

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to burial in the church of Saint-Denys, as if the Queen had been of no more account than some low-born maiden. The two Queens differed from one another in very many respects; the one allowed the English to invade France, and admitted them within the gates of Paris, ravaged the land with fire and sword, and sowed poverty and discord wherever she went; while the other brought unbroken peace to her country, and enlarged and enriched it with her own duchy and the wealth she derived therefrom. It is small wonder that the King regretted her and mourned for her during so long a period that some even thought he had died in the forest of Vincennes, whither he had betaken himself. For a very long time he clad himself in black, and ordered all the Court to do the same; those who came before him in coloured garb were driven from his presence with contumely, and there was not one of his ambassadors, no matter what his rank might be, but was clad in sable.

The ancient history from which I have already quoted, adds that: 'When he gave his daughter in marriage to M. d'Angoulême, he who later became King of France, the Court was not allowed to put by its mourning; and on the day they were married in the chapel of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, bride and bridegroom were clad in the deepest black, out of respect for the dead Queen, Madame Anne of Brittany, mother of the bride. They stood in the presence of the King her father and all the princes of the blood and the noble lords and prelates, princesses, matrons and maidens, all wearing

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mourning for the late Queen.' This is the historical account; the grief must indeed have been sincere that could not put off its mourning even upon a wedding day. It enables us to judge whether the Queen was loved by her husband, and whether she was worthy of the great love he bore his *Bretonne* as, in his gayer moments, he liked to call her.

Had she lived, she would never have given her consent to this marriage of her daughter with M. d'Angoulême; in her lifetime she often opposed it and endeavoured to set the King against it, for in the first place she cordially detested Madame d'Angoulême (who later became the Queen-Regent) —the two were utterly unlike one another in disposition, and had nothing whatever in common. In the second place, she wished to marry her daughter to Charles of Austria, at that time a young man, *le plus grand seigneur de la chrétienté*, who afterwards became Emperor; and in the third place, she took it ill of M. d'Angoulême that he presumed to draw so near to the throne; not that she gave much thought to this, or allowed her mind to dwell on it, for she hoped to have several more children; when she died she was but thirty-seven years of age.

The great and wise Queen Isabel of Castille was her contemporary, and in character and disposition there was a considerable resemblance between the two Queens. They were very fond of one another, and held frequent intercourse by means of their ambassadors, who were constantly carrying letters

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and presents backwards and forwards; thus does virtue ever seek out virtue.

King Louis was persuaded, in later years, to marry for the third time, and chose as his wife Queen Mary, sister of the King of England, a very beautiful princess, but too young for his taste. He married for a purpose, namely, that of bringing about peace with England and restoring order to his country, for he never forgot Queen Anne as long as he lived: he gave orders that when he died he should be buried with her, so that both might lie in the same grave. Their tomb is still to be seen at Saint-Denys, fashioned in as beautiful white marble as is possible to be seen anywhere.

I shall say no more on the subject of Anne of Brittany; others have written of her, and if any desire to learn more about her, there are books by better writers than I am or shall ever be: what I have written has been done but to please myself.

But I would add just this, that it is from her that our queens and princesses have derived the custom of surrounding their coats-of-arms and escutcheons with a girdle; she was the first to introduce it.

I say no more, for I was not of her time; but I can vouch that I have spoken nothing but the truth, which I have culled, as I have said, from various books, and from my grandmother, Madame la Seneschale, and from Madame de Dampierre, my aunt, a true recorder of Court history and withal a wise and virtuous lady, who joined her mistress's household a hundred years ago, at the age of eight. She could write fluently on all

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subjects, and had a very excellent memory. She was, besides, a brilliant talker, and I have seen our kings and queens listening to her with every evidence of great pleasure, for she knew everybody, both of her own time and of the past: she was, indeed, looked upon as an oracle! King Henri III. gave her an appointment as lady-in-waiting to the Queen. I have learnt much from her teaching, and hope to make good use of my knowledge as I proceed. The following epitaph was written for Queen Anne:—

*'Cy gist Anne, qui fut femme de deux grands rois;
En tout grande cent fois, comme regne deux fois.
Jamais reine comme elle n'enrichit tant la France.
Voilà que c'est d'avoir une grande alliance.'*

CHAPTER II

CATHERINE DE MEDICIS

I HAVE often wondered how it is that out of the many excellent writers that we have seen in France in our own time, not one has ever had sufficient interest in the Queen-Mother, Catherine of Medicis, to write a record of her life. Certainly there is no lack of material, which, indeed, seems admirably suited for the pen of the biographer, if ever the details of a queen's life were. Was it not the Emperor Charles who once remarked to Paulo Jovio, on his return from some victorious expedition, in which he had threatened the King of France with war, that his biographer would only have to supply ink and paper; he would himself cut out the work for him? In truth, this queen has cut out the work so well and so thoroughly, that a good writer, warming to his task, might have composed an Iliad on the subject of her life. The silence is due either to laziness or ingratitude, for the Queen herself was ever a generous patron of learning and authorship. I could mention several who have received great bounty at her hands, and were guilty of gross ingratitude towards her after her death.

There was indeed one man who set himself to write of her, and produced a little book which

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he entitled 'The Life of Catherine'; but he was an impostor, in whose statements we can put no credence, for there are more lies than truth in his book. The Queen herself said, when she saw it, that his falsehoods would be evident to everybody and no one could fail to notice them. The author was her mortal enemy, hostile to her family, her position, her way of living, her honour and her temperament; and for this reason of no account as a historian. For myself, I would gladly make use of the gift of a fluent and ready pen, if I had it, wherewith to praise and honour this great lady in a manner worthy of her fame. Whatever my qualifications, I will use them to the best of my ability in this my self-imposed task of biography.

On her father's side the Queen belonged to the race of the Medicis, one of the most noble and illustrious houses not only of Italy but of the whole world. Strange though it may seem, she became estranged from that side of her family; the alliances that she made later with other kingdoms prevented her from keeping very closely in touch with Italy: doubtless it was better so, for foreign alliances are worth at least as much, and in some cases more than alliances between related kingdoms. Yet the house of the Medicis has been always more or less closely allied to the throne of France, and still bears upon its coat-of-arms the Fleurs de Lys that Louis XI. presented to it as a sign of his perpetual goodwill towards the noble family. On her mother's side, Catherine came originally

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from one of the most ancient families of France, the great house of Boulogne and Auvergne, and at heart she was a true and loyal Frenchwoman. It were hard to say which of the two houses could boast the greater antiquity or tell of deeds the more memorable. In his funeral oration delivered at Blois, the Archbishop of Bourges, the famous Renaud de Beaune, as great a scholar and reverend a prelate as any in Christendom, spoke eloquently and fervently of the late Queen; this is what he said :

‘At the time when Brennus, the great Captain of the Gauls, was leading his army through the whole of Italy and Greece, he had in his company two French noblemen, one of whom was called Felsinus and the other Bono; and they, when they saw that Brennus, after many noteworthy victories, had adopted the evil plan of invading the temple at Delphi and distributing the spoil among his friends and his army, left him of one accord and passed over into Asia with their ships and all their men, and penetrated so far into the interior that they came at length to the Persian Sea, which lies near to Lydia and the land of the Medes. After they had won many victories and conquered many peoples they withdrew and passed again into Italy, in the hope of returning to France. Felsinus halted at a place which is to-day the site of Florence, on the banks of the river Arno, which he judged would be a pleasant spot to settle in; and there he founded the city which we now call Florence. His companion, Bono, built the town of

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Bononia, now called Bologna, in the neighbourhood of his friend's settlement. And further, since the aforesaid Felsinus had done great things in the land of the Medes, he was from that time forth called "Medicus" among his people, and that surname has remained in his family even unto this day ; just as, so we read, Paul was termed the Macedonian, on account of his conquest of Macedonia under Perseus, and Scipio was called Scipio Africanus on account of his conquests in Africa.'

I do not know whence M. de Beaune derived his information, but it is not likely that, in the presence of the King and all the company assembled at the funeral of the Queen, he would have made such a statement without good authority. It will be seen how different is this account of the descent of the ancient family of the Medicis from the account given in the little book lately mentioned, which claims to set forth a true life of the Queen. And further, the said *Sieur de Beaune* goes on to say that we may read in the chronicles how one named *Everard de Medicis*, of Florence, several years later, went with many of his subjects to the help of *Charlemagne* when the latter was on an expedition in Italy against *Didier*, King of Lombardy ; and after *Everard* had valiantly succoured the great Emperor and assisted him to the best of his power, he was in return formally invested with the overlordship of the city of Florence. And again, several years later still, one *Anemond de Medicis* went with many of his men on an expedition into the Holy Land under *Godefroy de*

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Bouillon, and died there at the siege of Nicea in Asia. Nobility of character and grandeur in action have ever been the attributes of this house, and until such time as the intestine wars in Italy between the emperors and the people reduced Florence to a republic, illustrious members of the family of the Medicis again and again manifested their valour and their greatness; an example of this is indeed to be found in the annals of the last century in the person of the great Cosmo de Medicis, who, with the help of his men and his armaments, drove back the Turks to the Mediterranean and far into the East, with the result that no man of his time, however great, was his equal in power or valour or riches.

The temples and sacred places that he built, the monasteries founded by him all over the world, even as far as Jerusalem, afford ample proof of his piety and devotion.

We might also mention Lorenzo de Medicis, who for his noble deeds won the title of Lorenzo the Magnificent, the two holy Popes Léon and Clement, and a number of noteworthy cardinals of the name of Medicis, all great men in a family deservedly famous for its great men. To Cosmo de Medicis belongs the credit of maintaining and preserving the majesty and dignity of a kingdom which, when he entered upon it, was sorely troubled with invaders.

It would, in short, be difficult to discover any incidents in the history of the family of the Medicis that are not calculated to add to its grandeur and its fame.

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As for the house of Boulogne and Auvergne, who is there among us who would venture to question its greatness, seeing that it owes its origin to that brave Eustache de Boulogne, whose brother, Godfrey de Bouillon, bore arms, in company with a numerous band of princes, lords, knights and Christian soldiers, even to the gates of Jerusalem, in the struggle for our Saviour's tomb, and who eventually, in virtue of his great deeds with the sword and by the grace of Heaven, became King, not of Jerusalem alone, but of a large portion of the East, greatly to the confusion of Mahomet, and of the Saracens and Mohammedans. It was he who, to the wonder of all the rest of the world, restored Christianity in Asia, where it had been almost completely extinguished.

Alliance with this ancient house was sought by almost all the kingdoms in Christendom—by France, England, Scotland, Hungary and Portugal. I have heard it said by President de Thou that Portugal belonged by right to Catherine, and the Queen did me the honour at Bordeaux to tell me so herself, when she received the news of the death of King Sebastian. She had, indeed, been allowed to come before the last assembly of the States held in Portugal prior to the death of King Henri, in order to plead her cause and assert her right to the throne; and it was in the same cause that she entrusted M. de Strozzy with orders to invade the country after the King of Spain had ventured to usurp the crown: she was only prevented from carrying out her intentions for reasons which I will give later

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on, in another connection. I leave it to the reader to decide whether the house of Boulogne was a great house; even such an one as I have heard described by Pope Pius IV., with a yawn, as he sat at meat with his cardinals shortly after his election; a house, as he said, greater and more noble than any other he could name in France, for it surpassed all others in antiquity, valour and fame.

There is no truth whatever in the statements made by those evil-minded detractors who assert that the Queen was a poor Florentine of humble origin. She was not so poor but she could bring to France, by her marriage, lands that are to-day worth 120,000 francs, the counties of Auvergne and Lauragais, to wit, and the seignories of Leverons, Donzenac, Boussac, Gorreges, Hondecourt and several others, all of which she inherited from her mother: and further, by her dowry, she enriched the treasury by no less a sum than 200,000 ducats, or more than 400,000 francs of our money, together with a great quantity of furniture and a handsome collection of jewels and precious stones, including pearls larger and finer than any I had ever seen, which she gave, in later years, to her daughter-in-law, the Queen of Scotland; I have myself seen her wearing them.

Moreover, she brought to France many seignories and noble mansions which belonged to her in Italy. And above all, by her marriage, she brought peace to the troubled realm of France, at that time sorely harassed by the imprisonment of her King and her sad loss of Naples and Milan.

King François was never tired of repeating how

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greatly his marriage had profited him and how admirably it had served his ends. On her coat-of-arms, from the time of her betrothal, the Queen bore the device of a rainbow, with the words '*Elle porte la lumière et la sérénité*' ('*Lucem fert et serenitatem*'), by which was meant that a light in the sky, followed by a rainbow, signifies fair weather after a storm, and that this Queen was the emblem of the calm serenity of peace.

The Emperor did not, from this time, dare to press his claims further (in spite of his own ambitious motto: '*Plus Outre*'); although there was, nominally, a truce between him and King François, he still brooded over his designs against France; it was his ambition to steal away from her as much territory as he could lay hands on. The marriage with Catherine was so exceedingly distasteful to him that (so I have been told by a reliable authority, a lady of the Court) but for his marriage with the Empress, he would himself have formed an alliance with the Pope and married his niece, in order that he might have the support of so strong a faction. He feared lest the Pope might be instrumental in depriving him of Naples, Milan and Genoa, for the Pope had, indeed, promised as much to the King of France when he handed him over his niece, together with her magnificent dowry of money, land and jewels. To provide her with a portion worthy of so great an alliance, the Pope had promised the King three pearls of inestimable value, the envy of every king and every emperor in the world, and those pearls

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were the fair cities of Naples, Genoa and Milan. And, in fact, had he lived to a more mature age, there is every reason to believe that the Pope would have fulfilled his promise (and dearly would the Emperor have paid for his earlier ill-treatment of the Pope); but he died young, and the last fair clause of the bargain was not at this time ratified.

Here then, in the pleasant land of France, we see our Queen married, at the age of fourteen, with great pomp and ceremony, by her uncle, Pope Clement VII., and brought hither by sea in great triumph to Marseilles. Her father, Lorenzo de Medicis, Duc d'Urbain, and her mother, Magdelaine de Boulogne, were both dead by this time. She had been left an orphan when still a minor.

So dear was she to the King, her father-in-law, and to King Henri, her husband, that, although after she had been married for six years she had brought him no heir to the throne (and it was essential that there should be issue from the union), yet no one could succeed in persuading the King or M. le Dauphin to repudiate her; both declared that they would never consent to such a course, so fondly did they love her. And sure enough, after ten years, in accordance with what was natural to the women of the family of Medicis, all of whom were slow to conceive, there was born to the Queen and the Dauphin the little François, afterwards King François II.

Later the Queen of Spain was born, and in due course that noble progeny of whom we have since heard so much; some, alas! no sooner born than

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dead, for a strange fatality hung over the family from the first. As the number of his children increased, so the King's love for his wife increased, so much so that, although of a very amorous disposition, and fond of making love to women, he often said that, of all the women in the world, he knew of none he valued more highly, nor any that were better mothers to their children. And he was fully justified in his praise, for he was speaking of a princess who was both fair and very lovable.

She was of commanding stature and bore herself with great dignity; though majestic in appearance, she could be gentle and tender upon occasion. A graceful person, a lovely and attractive face, a very white neck and bosom, and a skin as soft as the peach and clear as the day (lovelier than that of any of the ladies of her Court, so I have heard it said), a well-developed bust and a very well-turned leg and shapely ankle (as also I have heard from her ladies), which she took care to clothe in pretty hose and very beautiful and well-fitting shoes, and as sweet a little hand as I have ever seen, such were the claims of Catherine de Medicis to beauty of form and feature.

The poets of old were wont to sing of the beauty of Aurora's hands and fingers, but to my mind the Queen surpassed her in this respect; to her hands belonged a charm and a loveliness that they retained until the day of her death. Her son, King Henri III., inherited his own beautiful hands from his mother.

She was never known to dress other than in a

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very elaborate and becoming manner, and her rich toilettes always had the charm of novelty about them; the fashions of her time, influenced by her taste, were ever-changing but always attractive. In short, there was much in her to love; and that reminds me of how she went one day to Lyons to visit a certain painter named Corneille, who had made pictures of all the great lords, princes and knights, together with the great queens, princesses and ladies of the Court of France, which hung round the walls of a large room in his house; and when we entered this room we caught sight of the Queen herself, depicted in all her loveliness, clad *à la françoise* in a fur-trimmed robe with large sleeves of silver gauze, and wearing a hood embroidered with the splendid pearls of which she was so proud, her beautiful face reproduced upon the canvas with such exquisite skill that only speech was wanted to make it seem alive; at her side stood her three lovely daughters. Catherine was delighted at the picture, and the rest of us, who had accompanied her, were much amused to see the pleasure she took in looking at her image on the wall and examining it in every detail, admiring and praising her own beauty as depicted by Corneille. She could not take her eyes off the canvas, until at length M. de Nemours turned to her and said: 'Madame, I consider the picture an excellent likeness: more I cannot say; and methinks your daughters, too, do you great credit, for, with all their loveliness, they do not surpass you in beauty, nor put their mother in

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the shade with their own brilliance.' To this she replied: 'Cousin, you must, I think, be aware, from the costume and setting of the picture, of the time at which it was painted; and you, of all the company, can best tell whether you have ever seen me thus' (pointing to the likeness) 'and whether men esteemed me beautiful as you say they did.' And on this there was not one among us but lauded her beauty to the skies. She was a mother worthy of her daughters, and the daughters were worthy of their mother; her beauty remained to her throughout her lifetime, through all her married life and her sad widowhood, even up to her death; not but what in her later years she was without doubt less fresh than she had been in her prime, but to the last she was a beautiful and a fascinating woman.

Her beauty and charm were by no means her only attractive qualities. She had a delightful sense of humour, and could, when she chose, be exceedingly good company. She was fond of sport and exercise of all kinds, being herself a graceful dancer, but one who never sacrificed her dignity, whether in the ballroom or elsewhere. Hunting was her chief delight. I have heard a tale from one of the ladies of her Court with regard to her love of the chase which is worth repeating. King François used to choose from among the ladies of his Court a certain number of his favourites, the most beautiful and amiable, whom he called his 'little band of ladies,' and often would escape from the burdens of statecraft and betake himself with this

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'little band' to one of his country houses, there to hunt the stag and amuse himself as he liked best, staying thus in retirement now eight days, now ten, according to his fancy. Our Queen, who was at that time only Madame la Dauphine, when she found that she herself was excluded from these parties, although her own ladies formed the principal part of the company, begged the King to take her also, whenever he went a-hunting, and he, indeed, paid her so great an honour as never thereafter to go on any expedition without the Queen. It is said that she was extremely quick-witted, quick too at discovering the King's intentions and drawing his secrets from him; she had ears for everything and there was little that went on in the State of which she was unaware; if she was a good huntswoman, there is no doubt that she was quite as good, if not better, as a stateswoman.

King François thought no less of her for liking to be with him, but rather was he flattered at the idea of her showing a fondness for his company, of which he gave her a generous share. He had a natural liking for his mother, which increased with the years; it was his delight to afford her a good run and an exciting chase, in which he was ever to be seen following the Queen at a gallop, for she was a good horsewoman and a bold rider. That she was a graceful figure on horseback can readily be believed; she it was who first introduced the use of the stirrup and side-saddle, a mode of riding calculated to display the charms of a lady's ankle better than any other. She rode until she was

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sixty and even later—until, in fact, she became too feeble to sit her horse. Riding was one of her chief pleasures, and she loved above all a long hard gallop, somewhat to the detriment, it must be confessed, of her figure, for she was thrown not a few times in the course of her life, and once she broke a leg and once had concussion of the brain. When she was a widow, with the burden of the whole kingdom on her shoulders, she accompanied the young King, her son, on all his riding expeditions, and took him and all her children with her on her own; and when the King her husband was still alive, she almost invariably went with him whenever he hunted the stag or any other animal. When he played at pall-mall, more often than not she watched him play, or joined in the game herself; she was also very fond of drawing the strong-bow, a sport at which she was particularly skilful: she would take her bow with her whenever she went out walking, and aim at anything that attracted her attention.

When the weather was bad and amusement had to be sought within doors, she could always be relied upon to invent a new dance or a fresh ballet. Many a new game do we owe to her, in all of which she joined: she could be serious and dignified enough when it was necessary, but on occasion she was as frivolous as any young maiden fresh from the country.

She was very fond of watching a play, whether comedy or tragedy; but after the production of *Sophonisba*, a tragedy written by M. de Saint-

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Gelais, and very well acted at Blois by her own daughters and various ladies and gentlemen of her Court on the occasion of the marriages of M. de Cypière and of the Marquis d'Elbeuf, she conceived the notion that it had brought misfortune to the country (for evil enough befell France at this time) and she never allowed it to be played again. But in comedies and tragi-comedies she still continued to take pleasure, even in such as *Zani* and *Pantalons*, and laughed at them as heartily as anyone; she had a happy and an infectious laugh; for she was by nature cheerful and fond of a joke. She knew well how to tell a tale, and never failed to lay stress on the right word or to repeat a phrase in the right place.

She was an excellent needlewoman, and spent most of her time after dinner in embroidering in silks.

In short, the Queen devoted herself to every honest sport and pastime, and there was not one worthy of herself and her sex but she exercised herself upon it.

Lest I should be accused of prolixity I will say no more, contenting myself with the foregoing short account of her charms and accomplishments.

When she styled anyone '*Mon ami*,' she meant that she thought him a fool, or that she was in a rage with him. There was a certain gentleman of her household, named M. de Bois-Fevrier, who exclaimed, on being called '*Mon ami*' by the Queen: 'Ah! Madame, I would rather you called me your enemy, for to call me your friend is as much as to

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say that you think me a fool or that you are angry with me; I have long noticed this in your disposition.'

As to the qualities of her mind, that they were of an admirable and most exceptional nature is indeed demonstrated by the glamour of the numerous deeds and signal acts of policy by which the path of her life is surrounded. The King her husband and his Council held her in such high esteem that when the former went on a voyage into Germany he appointed her to act in his absence as Regent over the entire realm, solemnly declaring the appointment in the High Court of the Parliament of Paris. And so wisely did she conduct herself in her new office that the State, in the King's absence, suffered no change or alteration during her administration of the government: on the contrary, she conducted things so well that the treasury was enriched, the army increased and the King benefited in many other ways, so much so that on his return he continued to avail himself of her help, with the result that the principal towns in the duchy of Luxemburg, such as Yvoy, Mont-Medy, Dampvilliers, Chimav, and others, were won over to his side.

I leave it to the reader to decide whether he who wrote the fine life of which I have spoken is right in saying that never once did the King, Catherine's husband, allow her to meddle with affairs of State. Is not the fact that he made her Regent in his absence ample proof that he trusted her judgment in matters of statecraft implicitly? Always when

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he went on his journeys to visit his armies, year by year, did he appoint her his substitute.

What happened after the battle of Saint-Laurens, when the country was in a state of great commotion and the King had gone to Compiègne to raise a fresh army? So eagerly and enthusiastically did she enter upon her duties that even the gentlemen of Paris were sufficiently stirred up to go to the help of their King; the money and other necessities that they supplied were very urgently needed, and were provided just at the right moment.

When the King was wounded, those who were living at the time and had opportunities of observing her, cannot but have noticed the way in which she devoted herself to nursing him, watching by his bedside night after night, offering prayers to Heaven on his behalf, arranging processions to church and sending couriers in all directions in search of physicians and surgeons. But when his hour had come and he had passed from this to another and a better world, she shed such bitter tears, gave way to such heartfelt lamentations, that it seemed as though she would never again be comforted; whenever anyone spoke to her about him, she never failed, as long as she lived, to heave a sigh that seemed to come from the depths of her soul. From that time she adopted a device which she chose as being appropriate to her great grief, that of a heap of quicklime upon which a plentiful stream of water dropped from heaven; and beneath it the inscription, in Latin:

'Ardorem extincta testantur vivere flamma.'

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The drops of water and the tears bore witness to the ardour of her affection, even though the flames were extinguished; the device was founded on an allegory derived from the natural characteristic of quicklime, which causes it, on the addition of water, to flare up and continue to glow and smoke (or to show its ardour) even after the flame itself is extinguished.

In this way did our Queen testify to her love by her tears, even after the flame, which was the King her husband, had gone out. Although he was dead, she wished by her tears to show that she would never forget him nor cease to love him.

A somewhat similar device was adopted in former times by Madame Valentine de Milan, Duchesse d'Orléans, after the death of her husband, who was killed at Paris, and whom she mourned so tenderly that, as a solace and a comfort to her sorrow, she chose as her device a watering-pot, with a single S engraved on the lid, by which it was conveyed that she, now solitary, not seldom sighed and suffered; and round the said watering-pot were written the words:

*'Rien ne m'est plus,
Plus ne m'est rien.'*

The device is still to be seen in the church of the Cordeliers at Blois, in the chapel belonging to the Duchesse d'Orléans.

When the good René, King of Sicily, lost his wife Isabel, Duchesse de Lorraine, he grieved so bitterly that nothing seemed to bring any pleasure to his melancholy life, and when certain of his favourites

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and most intimate friends endeavoured to afford him some consolation he took them into his closet and there showed them a painting, executed by his own hand (for he was an excellent painter), of a bow with a broken string, beneath which was written the words:

'Arco per lentare piaga non sana.'

And when he had shown them the picture, he addressed them in the following way: 'Friends, this painting contains an answer to all your arguments; for even as in destroying a bow, by breaking the string, we can in no way assuage the wound the arrow has made in the flesh, even so the life of my dear wife is broken and shattered by death, and the wound made in my heart by the loyal love I bore her will never be healed.'

In several places in Angiers are such broken bows to be seen, and always underneath are written the words: '*Arco per lentare piaga non sana*'; there is one in the chapel of Saint-Bernardin in the church of the Cordeliers. The King only adopted the device after the death of his wife; during her lifetime he bore another.

Round about the device of which I have spoken Queen Catherine placed various trophies, such as images of broken mirrors, shattered fans and torn feathers, broken quivers and jewels and pearls spilled upon the floor, and little broken pieces of chain, all to show that, since her husband was dead, she was determined to abjure all pleasure and enjoyment. But for the grace of God, and the steadfastness with which He had in His great mercy

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endowed her, she must have succumbed to her grief after her husband's death. Her children were still very young, and she saw only too well how great was her country's need of her. Of that we can speak of our own experience; for, like a Semiramis, or a second Athalie, she took upon herself to save the kingdom from ruin and her children and their wives from many a pitfall and snare set for them when they were still of tender age, and all the world could not but wonder at her greatness. When she took upon herself to act as Regent after the death of King François, her son, and during the minority of her other children, who reigned as kings in later years, by the ordering of the States of Orleans the King of Navarre was appointed Regent in her place, as first prince of the blood, and he showed himself only too ready to comply and seemed anxious to take the government completely into his own hands. But so cleverly did she win over the said States to her side, that in the end, had the King of Navarre persisted, she would have had him tried for high treason, and there is every reason to suppose that he would have been found guilty. It is possible that even as it was she would have impugned him, had it not been for the intervention of Madame de Montpensier, who had great influence over her; the King of Navarre consented to remain subservient to her government, and there the matter ended. I mention it as an example of the clever strokes of policy by which the beginning of her administration was marked.

In after years she grew more masterful, and

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became so well able to maintain her dignity and impress her authority upon her subjects that none, however great, dared contradict her. Indeed, no more than three months after her victory over the States of Orleans, when the Court was at Fontainebleau, the said King of Navarre, wishing, doubtless, to reassert his authority, took umbrage at the fact that M. de Guise carried the keys of the King's lodging every evening himself and kept them throughout the night in his room (which was, indeed, one of his duties as Grand-Maître); after he had locked up none dared go out without his permission: but this angered the King of Navarre greatly, for he wished to have the keys in his own keeping, and when the Queen refused to grant him his request, he took it so ill that one fine morning he came to the young King and the Queen to take leave of them, saying that he was departing from the Court, taking along with him all the princes of the blood whom he could persuade to follow him, together with the High Constable and his children and nephews. The Queen, to whom the announcement came as a complete surprise, was at first greatly astonished to see him there on such an errand, and immediately set herself to turn him from his purpose by holding out hopes to him that one day he would be well enough satisfied, and have all he wanted, if he would but be patient and wait. But by fair words she gained nothing; the King of Navarre remained obdurate. Whereupon she hit upon this clever plan: she sent word to the Constable that he, as the first

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and the oldest officer of the Crown, was on no account to leave the side of the King his master, but remain near him in accordance with the dictates of his high office. The Constable, being a wise and sensible man, and a zealous servant to his master, jealous of his honour and majesty, was by this fully reminded of the duties of his charge, which he seemed to have forgotten, and lost no time in presenting himself before the King, from whose side he refused, from that time on, to stir. At this the King of Navarre was greatly surprised, for, just as he was about to mount his horse, expecting the Constable to follow him, he found himself remonstrated with by the latter, who attempted to persuade the King also to stay, and not to leave the Court as he had at first intended, adding that, if he did go, he would have to go alone, for he could not accompany him, with honour to himself and loyalty to his master. Thereupon the King went in search of the Queen and the young King, and, after conferring with their Majesties, decided to abandon his journey, and gave orders for the return of the mules, that had already got as far as Melun. Peace was thus restored, greatly to the satisfaction of the King of Navarre: not that M. de Guise gave up any of his duties or lost a single one of his honourable titles, for he always maintained his pre-eminence and kept his authority without ever allowing himself to be taken advantage of; he was the one man in the world at that time least likely to be supplanted or ousted from his office. There is no

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doubt, as everyone, indeed, thought at the time, that but for the plan the Queen had devised with respect to the Constable, a great company must have left the Court and gone to Paris, where they would have done little good ; great credit is due to her for the happy idea. I was present at the time, and I know that all believed the idea to have originated with her, and not with the Cardinal de Tournon, however wise and learned a prelate he may have been. Those who insist on giving him the credit for the plan are guilty of falsehood ; in truth, prudent old counsellor though he was, the Queen was far wiser than he, or any of the King's Council, for that matter ; many a time when he happened to be at fault, did she set him on the right way again, as I have often seen for myself. It will be enough if I recount the following episode, while it is fresh in my mind, which she herself did me the honour to relate to me.

When she went to Guienne and Cognac to reconcile the Princes of the League and endeavour to bring peace to her troubled country, for she foresaw ruin in the quarrels she was attempting to disperse, she determined, as a preliminary, to proclaim an international truce, and in so doing deeply offended the King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé. They declared that the proclamation could not fail to do them harm and prejudice their cause with foreign nations, who would be likely to refuse to come on their promised journey to France, or at anyrate to put off their visit, thinking that the Queen had acted under their influence. They even decided to

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keep away from her and refuse to treat until the said truce should be withdrawn. The Queen, finding the Council at that time assembled, though composed of worthy men, yet on the whole an untrustworthy, not to say ridiculous and useless body, addressed them thus: 'Of a truth, you seek a strange remedy' (it was practically impossible for her to withdraw the proclamation). 'Can you not think of a better? You have the Huguenot regiments of Neufvy and of Sorlu, quartered at Maillezais. Why not drive me away from Niort and cut my forces to pieces; and then the truce would indeed be broken. What better way could there be of breaking it?' This suggestion was no sooner made than it was acted upon. Her own men were called out and put under the command of Captain l'Estelle; they stormed the enemy's forts and barricades with such energy that the latter capitulated in a very short space of time. Sorlu, a brave man and a valiant officer, was killed, Neufvy taken prisoner, and many others killed and wounded. The flags were captured and taken to the Queen at Niort. And she, with her accustomed clemency, pardoned the rebels, even to the extent of returning to them their flag and ensigns. It was a strange thing to do, but she desired, as she told me herself, to impress the young princes and show them that they had to deal with a princess of manifold resources, and that she was not one to proclaim a truce with one blast of a trumpet and break it with the next. And when she saw how she had filled them with shame, she

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proceeded to make their discomfiture complete by sending them word through the prisoners that they need never hope to overcome her by unreasonable and ill-timed demands, since it was in her power to work them good or evil, as she pleased.

Thus did the Queen read her Council a sharp lesson. I could mention several other instances had I not many things to treat of, of which the first shall be the refutation of a statement which I have often heard made, to the effect that it was she who was the first to take up arms and was the cause of all our civil wars. No one who is aware of the true origin of the war will ever believe it, for when the triumvirate was formed, with the King of Navarre at its head, she could not but be aware of the various conspiracies that were being arranged and the change that had come over the King of Navarre, who, once so strict a Huguenot, had now turned Catholic, and in so doing had filled the Queen with apprehension regarding the King her son, the country, and even her own person; she could not foresee how such conspiracies and convocations of Parliament could end, though at present she knew that everything was being done in strict secrecy. When she began to feel that, notwithstanding all her endeavours, she would never get to the bottom of the matter, as we say, she determined upon a day when the King of Navarre was holding a secret council in his chamber, to establish herself in the room immediately above; by placing her ear against a hole in the flooring, she contrived to hear everything that went on. Among other

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things she overheard one proposition that greatly enraged her and embittered her against her foes, for the Marshal Saint-André, one of the triumvirate, proposed that the Queen should be put into a sack and thrown into the Seine, for as long as she was directing the war, he declared that they would never succeed in any undertaking. But the late M. de Guise, an honest as well as a brave man, said that that must never be, for it would be a dastardly act to put to so shameful a death the wife and mother of their kings, and strenuously did he oppose any such proposition. For this the Queen had ever a tender place in her heart for him, and showed her affection after his death in her treatment of his children, to whom she restored all their land and property. I leave the reader to judge of the effect of all this upon the Queen, and whether she, having heard her proposed sentence with her own ears, had cause for fear, in spite of the protestations of M. de Guise. From what I have heard said by one of her most intimate friends, she feared lest the blow might be struck without the knowledge of M. de Guise, as, indeed, she well might, for, when one has to do with treachery and spite, it is best to be suspicious of everything and everybody, and make a confidant of none. There was, therefore, nothing for her to do but to look to her own salvation, and appeal to those of the Protestant party, the Prince de Condé and others, who were already under arms, and implore their aid in defence of a helpless mother and her innocent children.

Such is the account of the true origin of the civil

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war. The Queen never consented to go to Orleans with the others, as she well might have done; but she felt well assured that, amid all the turmoil of war, she need not fear for the safety of the King her son and the rest of her children so long as the State was in an uproar. Nevertheless, she implored the malcontents to give her a promise, which eventually she wrung from them, that when she should summon them to her side and bid them lay down their arms, they would do so; a request to which, so long as they formed a united party, they were very unwilling to consent, in spite of her numerous appeals to them, and in spite of her unwearying efforts to persuade them to aid her in promoting the peace she so ardently desired for her troubled realm. The firebrand of civil war, lighted as it had been by so many famous rebels, would have been extinguished for ever, had they only had faith in her and her counsels. I have myself heard her say as much with tears in her eyes, and I know how earnestly she toiled to bring about a settlement of the dispute.

How, then, can anyone charge her with having been the first to set fire to the torch of the first civil war, or indeed of the second, which broke out on that ill-fated day of Meaux? At that time her thoughts were all for hunting and sport and for amusing the King at his fine house at Monceaux, and suddenly there came the announcement that M. le Prince and all of the Religion were in arms, and indeed already in the field, with intent to surprise the King under cover of presenting him with a petition. Heaven

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knows what was the cause of this fresh outbreak, and Heaven knows how it might have ended but for the 6000 Swiss whom the Queen had so recently enrolled. Their enrolment was the reason given by the enemy for their own resort to arms, for they let it be understood that they considered the Swiss regiment had been got together for the sole purpose of doing battle with them; and yet they themselves were really the first to take up arms, as I know for a fact, for I was at that time at Court, and it was they who came to the King and Queen and begged them, in consideration of the coming of the Duke of Alba with his army, to protect the frontiers with armed men, for they feared that, under cover of crossing over into Flanders, the said Duke would make an inroad into France. The pressure they put upon the King and Queen, both in their letters and through the agency of countless embassies sent on their behalf, is no secret to anyone who professes to know anything whatever about the matter; even M. le Prince and M. l'Admiral themselves came to Saint-Germain-en-Laye to see the King; I saw them there myself.

I should also like to know (for in all that I write on these matters I have my own testimony as an eye-witness to fall back upon) who it was that took up arms on Shrove Tuesday, and who petitioned Monsieur, the King's brother, and the King of Navarre to lend a favourable ear to the enterprise which ended in the loss to Paris of La Mole and Coconas? Was it the Queen? Surely not, for it was by her prudence alone that a great conflagra-

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tion was avoided, which would have held Monsieur and the King of Navarre prisoners in the Bois de Vincennes; and it was she who, after the death of King Charles, imprisoned the King of Navarre and the King's brother so securely in the Louvre, in Paris, and barred their windows (or at anyrate those of the King of Navarre, who was lodged on the lower floor) one morning so effectually—I am only repeating what the King of Navarre himself, with tears in his eyes, told me—and kept so close a watch over them that they were quite unable to effect an escape, as indeed they had earnestly hoped. Had they been at large, the country must inevitably have fallen into serious disorder, and the King might never have succeeded in regaining Poland. When the royal party left Paris the Queen had the two brought to Lyons to the King, so closely watched, and yet so cleverly, that none who saw them would have thought them prisoners; they drove with her in the coach, and, at her intercession, the King in the end granted them a pardon for all their offences.

And who was it who overcame the scruples of Monsieur, the King's brother, and persuaded him to leave Paris in the dead of night, forsake the brother he had once loved so dearly, and take up arms and set the whole of France by the ears? M. de La Noue knows all there is to know of this particular instance, as well as every detail of the countless conspiracies that were set on foot after the siege of La Rochelle. It is certain that the Queen-Mother had no hand in the transaction;

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for the sight of brother opposed to brother and engaged in a fierce and obstinate struggle was so hateful to her that she declared she would die of the grief it caused her, or bring them together again, as indeed she did in the end. I was present when she declared at Blois, before the Parliament there, and in the presence of Monsieur, that there was nothing she so constantly besought Heaven to grant her as the reconciliation of the two brothers; when that should be brought about she would be quite ready to die, if God so willed it, with the best grace in the world; or, if necessary, she would be willing to retire and live in seclusion, in one of her mansions at Monceaux or Chenonceaux, or where they pleased, and never again interfere in the affairs of France, but end her days in peace. And in fact she would have done so, but the King begged her not to leave him, saying that both he and his kingdom still had great and urgent need of her. I am convinced that had she not succeeded in establishing peace at this juncture, things would have gone badly for France; for there were 50,000 foreigners at that time incessantly on the watch for an opportunity to fall upon our country and ruin her.

She was not the first to take up arms, either in this instance or at Blois, when the States desired that there should be but one religion in the land and proposed to abolish the religion which they did not themselves hold, adding that if this could not be done by spiritual, they would resort to temporal weapons to attain their end. Nor was it she who

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was responsible for the capture of Mont-de-Marsan, La Fère in Picardy, and Cahors. I well remember the King's treatment of M. de Miossans, who had been sent to him on an embassy by the King of Navarre; he rebuked him roundly and said that although there was no lack of fine words with his party, neither was there any reluctance in taking up arms and capturing cities.

Such, then, was the part played by the Queen in all our wars and insurrections; she not only did not ever set fire to the smouldering torch of rebellion, but when it was alight she never failed to exert all her energies to extinguish it, for she hated to see so many nobles and gentlemen done to death. But for her goodness of heart and her sympathy, many would now be dead who still flourish; indeed even now we feel the want of her guidance, for do not the poor cry out in their misery: 'Alas! the Queen-Mother is no longer here to make peace for us.' It was through no fault of hers that peace was not made at the time of her entry into Guienne to treat with the King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé at Cognac and Jarnac. I was present when she spoke to them with tears in her eyes and grief in her voice, and they would not listen; if they had, perhaps we should have been spared some of the miseries that befell us later.

She has also been accused of having been an accomplice in the war of the League. Then why, in that case, should she have negotiated the peace of which I have just spoken? Why should she have put down the tumult in Paris and reconciled the

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King with M. de Guise, only to put him to death a little later?

In short, abuse her, insult her as we will, we shall never again see so staunch a friend of peace in France.

With regard to the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew I cannot speak with any certainty, for I was at Brouage at the time; but I have heard it said that the Queen was not the prime mover in the terrible disaster. There were three or four others, whose names are well known to me, who were more zealous adherents of their religion than she was herself, who put pressure upon her, leading her to believe, if we are to judge by the threats that arose out of the wounding of the Admiral, that in the end the King, herself and all her children would suffer death at the hands of the Huguenots. Those of the Religion certainly did great harm by uttering such threats; for they only made matters more difficult for the poor Admiral, and his death the more certain. If only they had kept quiet and not expressed themselves quite so openly, and waited until the Admiral's wound was healed, he would assuredly have gone quietly out of Paris, and all might still have been well. M. de La Noue was quite of this opinion; often and often have I and M. de Strozze and he talked the matter over, for La Noue never cared for braggadocio in the mouth of anyone, whether King or noble or plain citizen. He blamed M. de Theligny, his brother-in-law, most severely, for belonging to the 'red-hot' party, calling him and his companions

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fools and idiots. But the Admiral never used such words as were attributed to him in his life—to any one, so far as I can make out—never uttered them publicly, at anyrate. What he may have done in private among his own particular friends is no concern of ours. And yet, to the assumption that he did say them we must attribute his own death and the murder of his people in that dreadful massacre of Saint-Bartholomew, and not in any way to the Queen. To say that she had a share in setting the whole thing on foot is a vile slander.

But to return to our Queen once more; her enemies have accused her of not being a true Frenchwoman. Heaven knows how loyal and true she was. Have I not myself been a witness of the energy she displayed in endeavouring to drive the English out of Havre? Did I not, with my own ears, hear what she said to M. le Prince, and did I not see how she sent him to Havre with many of the gentlemen of her suite and M. d'Andelot's companies and other Huguenot regiments, and how she herself led the army in person on horseback, like a second Marfisa, that fair warrior-queen of old? Did she not expose herself to the fire of the enemy as intrepidly as any young captain thirsting for glory, declaring again and again that she would never rest until the town were recaptured and the English driven out of it, hating like poison those traitors who had betrayed it into the hands of the enemy? In the end sure enough she succeeded, and the town passed once again into French hands.

When Rouen was besieged, I saw her almost

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beside herself with anger when she witnessed a party of English enter the town in a French galley that they had captured a year before, for she feared the place might fall irrevocably into the hands of the English if we failed to take it ourselves. She put forth every effort, worked herself to the bone, as we say, in her attempts to take it; and never failed to attend daily at Fort Saint-Catherine to consult with her officers and survey the battery. Often and often did I see her pass by along the cavernous road that led to the fort; cannons and arquebuses rained their shot on all sides of her, and she seemed entirely unconcerned.

Those who were there at the time saw her just as I saw her. There are still living a goodly number of her ladies who accompanied her on her perilous journey, caring none too well for the task; I know it for I saw them there myself. When the Constable and M. de Guise remonstrated with her, saying that she was endangering her life, she only laughed and asked them why she should take more thought of her life than they of theirs, since her courage was equal to theirs, and she only lacked the strength that to her sex was denied; her powers of endurance, whether on horseback or on foot, were indeed wonderful. Nor should it be forgotten that for many years France had not seen a queen or princess who looked better on horseback; and we must be careful to picture her at this time not as a gaunt, rather masculine Amazon, but as a gentle princess, lovely, charming and gracious to all with whom she had to deal.

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It has been said of her that she had leanings towards Spain. It is true that while her daughter Elizabeth lived (she who married King Philip II. of Spain) she entertained very kindly feelings towards that country; but after her daughter's death it were hard to discover a reason for the continuation of friendship with the Spaniards. True, she was ever a prudent ruler, and was always ready to entertain her son-in-law in a manner becoming to his rank, in order to ensure kindly treatment to her lonely daughter, as what mother would not be—and after all, were not her efforts in this direction also made with a view to keeping the King of Spain from troubling France and making war upon us, for Philip was naturally an ambitious man, and by no means lacking in courage.

Some, again, have hinted that she had no love for the French nobility, and was ever seeking to shed their blood by pitting them one against the other. In reply to this I can only remind the reader once more of the number of times she brought peace to her country, thereby sparing her subjects; and also of the fact that, while she was Regent and her children minors, the Court was never so free from wrangling and duelling, which she hated to see at any time; brawlers she forbade entry to the Court: they had strict injunctions to keep away, and were punished if they disobeyed. And later, I have myself often seen how at the Court, when the King happened to be away for a few days, and she was alone, at a time when fighting was becoming more and more common, she would never give her

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consent to a single combat, and issued strict orders to the captains of the guard to see that her wishes were carried out. If the truth were known, she was in this respect more dreaded by her subjects than the King himself, for she knew better than anyone how to deal with a rebel, and none dared risk her anger.

I remember well how on one occasion, when the King was visiting the Baths at Bourdon, my late cousin, de La Chastaigneraye, had a quarrel with Pardailhan. The Queen sent in all directions to find them, and forbid them to fight on pain of their lives, but for two whole days they were nowhere to be seen. She redoubled her efforts in the search, and succeeded so well that, on a Sunday morning, while my cousin was quietly awaiting the coming of his adversary in the Isle de Louviers, the Provost-Marshal suddenly appeared and carried him off a prisoner to the Bastille, in pursuance of the orders he had received from the Queen. But he only remained there one night, for the next day she sent for him and reprimanded him in tones that were at once bitter and gentle—it was characteristic of her nature to be now kind, now cruel, one mood following another in quick succession. I shall never forget what she said to me, too, when I tried to put in a word for my cousin: as I was the elder, I ought also to be the wiser of the two.

The year the King returned from Poland a quarrel arose between de Grillon and d'Entraigues, both brave and valiant gentlemen, who in due

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course called each other out and arranged to decide their difference by the sword; the King heard of it and sent M. de Rambouillet, one of the captains of his guard stationed near him at the time, to forbid them to meet. He ordered M. de Nevers and Marshal Retz to bring them together and effect a reconciliation, a task in which they proved unsuccessful. Thereupon the Queen summoned them that very night to her room; and inasmuch as their quarrel had to do with two great ladies of her train, she first addressed them haughtily and then begged them, in more gentle terms, to lay their differences before her and she would do them the honour of seeing what she could do in the matter, adding that since captains, marshals, and even princes had failed to reconcile them, she herself coveted the glory of bringing them once more into amity. She then made them embrace without more ado, taking the whole affair on her own shoulders, with the result that, through her prudence and foresight, the subject of the dispute, which touched the honour of her two ladies, and was of a delicate nature, never came to light at all. Truly a great princess! How can it be said that she had no love for the nobility? Rather, indeed, did she love them too well. I do not think there was a single great family in her kingdom that she did not know, and know thoroughly. She used to say that she had learned about them all from the great King François, who knew the genealogy of every ancient family in the land; and in another way from the King, her husband, for there was this about him,

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that he never forgot a man, although he may have only seen him once.

I have very frequently seen the Queen, when her son was still a minor, take it upon herself to present the nobles to him and point out to him how such a one had done so and so in the service of the King, his grandfather, in such and such a place, and how such another had done a service to the King, his father, and so on with all of them in turn. And she would then go on to exhort him to remember them and love them and not forget them when they again presented themselves; and this the King was well able to do, after so impressive an introduction.

Detractors have gone even further, and have said that she had no love for her people. It would seem so, indeed! There were more taxes and imports and subsidies levied, and more monopolies granted in a single year after she ceased to direct affairs than in all the time she acted as Regent for her children during their minority. And I would ask whether so much money was found hidden away in Italian banks as was expected? This I do know, that after her death not a halfpenny was to be found, and, as I have heard it said by every one of her financiers and every one of her own ladies, when she was burdened with debts to the extent of 8000 crowns, due in wages to the ladies and gentlemen of her household for the past two years, so much so that a few months before her death her accountants put the matter before her, she only laughed at them, saying that God must be praised for all

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things, and He would provide. So much for her avarice and the treasure she amassed. Indeed, she never saved anything for herself, for hers was a generous and a liberal nature, resembling that of her great-uncle, Pope Leo, and of Lorenzo the Magnificent. She spent her money ungrudgingly, giving presents, building mansions, arranging banquets and festivities. It was her delight to be for ever entertaining her Court with recreation of one sort or another; balls, dances, tourneys, running at the ring, followed in quick succession. Three times in her lifetime did she summon her people to superb spectacles. The first was at Fontainebleau on Shrove Tuesday, on the termination of the first disturbances that had arisen under her rule, at which was held a tournament, in which all manner of passages of arms took place, followed by a comedy on the subject of the fair Genevra of Ariosto, who was represented by Madame d'Angoulême, and in which others of the Queen's loveliest princesses and Court ladies took part; a fairer sight had never been seen. A second display was given at Bayonne at the instigation of her daughter, the Queen of Spain, the magnificence of which was such that her Spanish guests, usually so contemptuous of all games but their own, swore that they had never seen the like, and that their King might well take a lesson from Queen Catherine; they returned to their country greatly edified by the magnificence of the sight they had witnessed.

I am well aware that many in France have blamed her for a too lavish expenditure of the public

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moneys, especially in the case of the Spanish celebration of games. But the Queen said that she did it to show the foreigner that France had not been so greatly impoverished by the recent wars as was supposed, and that, if she could spend money on an occasion such as this, so too could she, if need were, spend it on occasions of greater importance to the country. Was she not, too, giving evidence of the skill of her nobles in the pursuit of arms? And surely this was not without its value in the sight of a possible enemy.

And besides, there was surely every justification for exceptional effort, when the object of the display was to do honour to the greatest Queen in Christendom, the most beautiful, the most virtuous and the best. It is undoubtedly true that had the show been a poor one the foreigner within our gates would have had cause to mock us, and return to his own country with the impression that we Frenchmen were a set of beggarly misers. It was therefore not without good reason, and only after ample consideration, that our good and wise Queen decided on expenditure on so large a scale. It was for similar reasons on another occasion—that of the arrival of the Poles in Paris—that she feasted and fêted them so superbly at the Tuileries, and afterwards, in a great tent completely surrounded with countless lights and torches, put before them what I may describe without exaggeration as the grandest ballet the world had ever seen. No less than sixteen of her fairest maidens took part, and they were arranged, in the first place, seated in the

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niches of a great castle. These sixteen ladies represented the sixteen provinces of France. After having paraded through the hall of the castle and having made a display of their charms, they came out and took their places in front of the castle in a curiously arranged little battalion, while some thirty violins played most melodious music, a martial air, very pleasant to listen to, to which the ladies of the ballet marched and wheeled and turned again, drawing up in front of their Majesties and making their bow before them. They then proceeded to dance a most curiously devised ballet of an intricate and complicated description. All the company were struck with wonder to see them twining in and out and round about and never losing their places or falling into any sort of confusion or disorder; the ladies were all most accomplished dancers, and had been, moreover, excellently well trained. The ballet itself lasted for about an hour, and when it was over the sixteen ladies representing, as I have said, the sixteen provinces of France, came to make their bow to the King and Queen in turn, and to the King of Poland, to Monsieur, his brother, to the King and Queen of Navarre, and all the great men of France and of Poland, each presenting a plate fashioned entirely of gold, about the size of the palm of a man's hand, delicately worked and engraved with what was meant to represent that fruit or produce of the field or the forest peculiar to the particular province to which the plate belonged. The plate of Provence, for instance, was adorned with oranges and lemons;

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that of Champagne with corn; a bottle of wine was engraved on the Bourgogne plate; on the Guienne plate a company of warlike men (a great honour, this, for Guienne); and so on, for all the plates.

We must not forget, either, that these pretty fancies were solely due to the Queen. She was a complete mistress of phantasy; and there was this about all she did, that in magnificence it was sure to surpass anything that had ever been done on similar lines before. Men used to say that only the Queen-Mother really knew what true grandeur meant. And if she spent her money, she also gave a great deal of pleasure at the same time. She often said that she took for her pattern the Roman emperors, who made a careful study of the art of amusing their people, to the end that they had no leisure to do evil, so much taken up were they in the pleasures devised for them by their rulers.

Besides the fact that she took a delight in giving pleasure to her people, it is also true to say that she busied herself in trying to find work for them; she took a great interest in the labouring classes, and paid them well for the work she gave them to do, occupying each according to his trade, especially masons and builders, whom she employed upon her splendid mansions, the Tuileries, Saint-Maur, Monceaux and Chenonceaux, in all of which there was still room for many improvements. She was also a generous patron of learning, and gladly read or had read to her any works presented to her by the scholars of the day; or if she heard of anything

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of note that had been written, she would buy it, even if it contained an invective against herself. At this she was almost invariably amused, looking upon it as mere nonsense, but never getting angry at anything that was said.

She wanted to be kept informed of everything that was going on. At the time of the second disturbance that arose during her reign the Huguenots had in their possession a very fine culverin, which was nicknamed the 'Queen-Mother.' They were compelled to bury it at Villenozze, being unable to drag it farther on account of the forced marches they had to take and of its weight; it was never afterwards found. When the Queen heard of this, she wished to know why the Huguenots had given it that name. And at length, after a great deal of pressing, she induced someone to tell her that it was because its calibre was greater than that of any other; the Queen was the first to laugh at the reply.

She never begrudged time or trouble spent on reading anything that attracted her fancy. I saw her once myself, going down the river from Blaye to dine at Bourg, reading from a parchment the whole way, like some lawyer or scribe, about a lawsuit that had recently taken place with reference to one Derdois, the favourite secretary of the late Constable, on account of a conspiracy that had been laid to his charge and for which he had been imprisoned at Bayonne. She did not take her eyes off the paper until she had finished it, although it extended to some ten pages or more.

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When nothing occurred to prevent her, she would herself read all the letters that she received, and more often than not write the despatches in her own hand, especially those that were addressed to the more important of her people. I once saw her write twenty long letters in a single afternoon.

Although she was an Italian, she could speak excellent French. To her own countrymen she usually spoke in French, so great was the respect she felt for the language of her subjects, and she was always ready to show her fluency to any nobles, distinguished foreigners, or ambassadors who came to pay their court to her after they had visited the King. Her replies were always pertinent, and delivered with a certain grace and dignity that was peculiar to her, whether she were speaking in private or in public. She never forgot that she was a queen, and spoke in true queenly style, and as a queen she knew how to make herself respected. I once saw her at Bordeaux, when she was taking her daughter, the Queen of Navarre, to her husband the King. She had commanded him to come with her and use his influence with a party of gentlemen who had refused to break up a certain brotherhood or society they had founded for purposes of their own, of which she strongly disapproved. These men came themselves one Sunday morning to find her, sought her out in the garden of the bishopric where she happened to be walking, and proceeded to explain to her the objects of their brotherhood and the benefits that were to be derived from it. She, without any

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preparation or forethought, gave them so sensible an answer, and brought forward such excellent objections to their odious and ill-founded arguments, that there was not one of them but admired her quickness and felt abashed at what he had heard her say. So crestfallen were they, indeed, that she was able to end by saying:

‘Gentlemen, I desire, and the King desires, that the society be abolished and that the subject never again be broached, both for secret reasons which I do not intend to divulge and also for those I have clearly stated in your hearing. If it be not abolished, then you will find out what it means to disobey the King and myself.’ Whereupon they all took their departure, and no more was heard of the matter.

Often would she successfully carry through an interview with some grandee who had offended her or done something he should not have done, never shrinking from saying exactly what she thought and felt, nor sparing the truth to anyone.

Never shall I forget how greatly she was feared and respected by M. de Savoie, who had been a companion to the King of Spain and had, in his time, seen so many important personages; had she been his mother he could not have treated her with greater respect; and the same could be said of M. de Lorraine, and indeed of all the nobles in Christendom. I could bring forward many other examples of what I allege, but I will speak of them in another place; let what I have already said now suffice.

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The Queen was, moreover, a good and devout Christian. She frequently took the Sacrament, and never let a day pass without attending divine service; she took care to make it a pleasant duty by arranging for the performance of the most beautiful chants, many of which had been especially revived at her request. She was by nature fond of music, and often gave pleasure to her Court by entertaining them with music of all kinds. Her reception-rooms were never closed to any of her ladies and gentlemen, as was the custom in Spain and her own country, and as, indeed, they so often were with others of our queens, Elizabeth of Austria and Louise of Lorraine, for instance. She often said that in this she followed the example of her father-in-law, King François, whom she greatly respected, and who had set the fashion of what may be termed an 'open Court'; she desired to entertain in true French fashion, as, indeed, did her husband the King, and her rooms became the favourite resort of the Court.

She was generally attended by a number of extremely beautiful and virtuous maidens, with whom she would hold daily converse in her ante-chamber, encouraging them to discourse upon matters of interest in a way that they might not otherwise have done. Any of her gentlemen who deliberately left the paths of virtue were banished from the society of her ladies and ran the risk of a worse punishment the while she refused them her pardon.

In short, her Court was indeed an earthly

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paradise and the training ground of honour and virtue, an ornament to France, as strangers who visited it never failed to realise. The latter were always sure of a welcome when they came; on the occasion of a foreign visit, she would give orders to her ladies to attire themselves in their best, and devote themselves to amusing the company and entertaining them in such a fashion that they should have no desire to go elsewhere. And if the ladies did not succeed in their endeavours they were severely scolded by their imperious mistress.

So great was the impression made by Queen Catherine upon her Court that when she died it was acknowledged by all to be no longer a Court except in name, and men declared that France would never see such a queen-mother again. But what sort of Court was it? you ask. Such as I swear no Empress of Rome ever gathered round her, nor any Queen of France before her day. It is true that during his lifetime the great emperor, Charlemagne, King of France, took a delight in setting up great plenary courts, composed of peers, dukes, counts, paladins, barons and knights of France, to say nothing of many other nobles of other lands, in order that they might, so are we told in the old romances of that day, be company for the Empress-Queen and share with her the pleasure of witnessing the countless jousts and tournaments that were arranged on such a magnificent scale by the knights-errant that came from all directions to take part in them. But then, what of that? These grand assemblies were only held

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three or four times a year, and, at the conclusion of each, those who had taken part retired to their own lands and houses, there to await the announcement of the next. And some say that Charlemagne, as he grew older, gave himself up more and more to the delights of the society of women, and even that his own daughters were not too particular in the intimacies they contracted with the gentlemen of the Court, and that when Louis le Débonnaire came to the throne he was obliged to banish his sisters, on account of the terrible scandals to which their numerous love affairs had given rise, together with a great company of gay women. I am not now speaking of the Court of Charlemagne at the time when the King was in the prime of life, for then, according to the ancient chronicles, he devoted himself chiefly to the amusements of war, but of that of his old age, when, as I have said, there was too much license, and the passions were allowed to run riot without any restraint. But the Court of King Henri II. and of our Queen was always the same, whether in time of war or in time of peace, whether resident for several months in one place, or moving from one of the King's pleasure castles to another; no fault was there ever to be found with it. It followed the Queen wherever she went; as a rule it comprised at least three hundred ladies—indeed, seldom less than that number.

The King's officers assert that the ladies of the Court usually occupied half the accommodation of a town or castle, a fact I can myself vouch for during

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a period of three and thirty years, for, except when absent on campaigns directed against foreign countries, I usually dwelt at the Court, for the reason that I could imagine no more agreeable place in which to spend my days.

Rightly to understand how fine a sight it was to see this lovely company of fair women, who indeed seemed divine rather than mortal, we must picture to ourselves the receptions that were held at Paris and elsewhere on the great occasion of a marriage of one of our Kings of France, or of a sister of the King, that of the Dauphin, for example, or of King Charles, King Henri III., the Queen of Spain, Madame de Lorraine, or the Queen of Navarre, to say nothing of the great weddings of our princes and princesses, that of M. de Joyeuse for example, which would have outshone them all in splendour and magnificence if only the Queen of Navarre had been able to be present. Then there was the great meeting at Bayonne, the arrival of the Poles, and countless other splendid gatherings, which I should never cease from describing if once I started upon so agreeable a task. On every occasion were the Queen's ladies to be seen rivalling one another in beauty, vying with one another in dress and appointments, for, at such festivities, the King and Queen always themselves provided the costumes for their ladies, and it would have been difficult to decide which was the most charming.

In short, never before had there been seen anything more beautiful, more striking, or more superb than when, at the end of the day, the gallant as-

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sembly met in the ballroom, in the Palace or the Louvre, and shone there like so many stars upon a clear, calm summer night. The Queen gave her ladies clearly to understand that she wished them always to appear in rich apparel; during her own widowhood, even, she never arrayed herself in sombre silks and satins, but was always dressed in a becoming manner, suitable to the particular occasion. She never failed to look a queen in every sense of the word.

On the wedding day of her two sons, Charles and Henry, it is true she wore a gown of black velvet, wishing, as she said, in this way to make this great occasion stand out from any other; but while her husband was alive, she always dressed handsomely, not to say superbly, and always looked the great lady she undoubtedly was. Perhaps one of the most charming spectacles of all was that afforded by the Court on the occasion of some ordinary Church procession, such as that held on Palm Sunday, when they went on their way to church carrying palms, or on Candlemas Day, carrying torches which vied in brilliancy with the brilliancy of the dazzling company.

And then, too, when the Queen was carried out into the country in a litter, after she was married, and perhaps not able to sit her horse, you would always see some forty or fifty maidens following on gaily caparisoned palfreys, bearing themselves as gracefully as the most practised rider, their hats adorned with lovely feathers, which added to the beauty of the whole scene, the waving plumes, as it

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were, suggesting a challenge in the lists of love or of war. Virgil, in describing the appearance of Queen Dido when she went a-hunting, does not convey to our minds a picture half so enchanting as that of our Queen Catherine and her ladies when bent upon the same errand.

True to the principles instilled in her by the great François, King of Merriment, Catherine not only did not forget what he had taught her, but strove ever to follow in his footsteps, or even, as I have myself heard her say three or four times during her lifetime, to surpass him in the magnificence and gaiety of her entertainments. Those who have, as I have, seen all these things will, as they read, feel their hearts grow warm within them; all that I have described I have seen for myself, and know it to be true.

Alas! how sad the day on which so great a queen laid down her life! I have heard tell how our present King, some eighteen months after he had begun to entertain more certain hopes of becoming King, fell to discussing with the late Marshal Biron as to how he might continue to maintain a Court as brilliant as that which surrounded the Queen his mother; for at that time it was more brilliant than it had ever been. The Marshal replied: 'It lies not in your power, Sire, nor in the power of any who may be king hereafter, unless it were that you could prevail upon Almighty God to bring the Queen-Mother back to life again.' But that was not what the King wanted; far from it, indeed, for, before Catherine came to die, there was no one on

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earth whom he hated more, and for no reason, so far as I could see: but of that he is the better judge.

Unhappy day of death! coming when we Frenchmen needed our Queen more than ever before; and we need her still, alas!

She died at Blois, of grief at the massacre that took place and the ghastly tragedy that was enacted there; before she died she came to realise that, without foreseeing what it might mean, it was she who had summoned the princes to Blois, acting for the best, as she always did; nor was she long left in ignorance of the fact, for the Cardinal of Bourbon told her plainly: 'Alas, Madame, you have, without knowing it, led us all to the slaughter!' This fact, and the death of all those poor wretches, so weighed upon her mind that she took to her bed (she had been ailing for some time) and never rose from it again.

They say that when the King announced to her the murder of the Duc de Guise, and how that he was himself now absolute King, ruling without companion, without a master, she asked him whether he had, before striking so terrible a blow, put the affairs of his country in order. On the King's replying that he had, 'God's will be done,' she said, 'God's will be done, my son!' Wise as she was, she foresaw only too well what would happen, both to him and to his kingdom.

There are some who have spoken strange things concerning her death, and even hinted at poison. It may be that she was poisoned, and it may be that she was not; at the time men said she died

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worn out with grief, for which, poor lady, she had cause enough.

She was laid upon her bed of state, so I have heard from one of her ladies, just as Queen Anne was laid, with the same reverence, neither more nor less, clothed in the same royal garments which that Queen had worn—garments that had been used for no other queen since her death. And later, she was borne into the chapel of the castle with the same pomp and ceremony that was observed at the burying of Queen Anne, and there she lies in peace, even to this day.

The King had expressed a wish that she might be taken to Chartres and thence to Saint-Denys, there to lie beside the King her husband in the splendid tomb that had been built for him; but the war which followed so closely upon her death prevented her son from carrying out his designs.

I have said all I can in this place concerning this great Queen, who has certainly proved herself a subject worthy of all possible eulogy; my only fear is that my narrative may have fallen short of my intentions. Such as it is, I lay it in all humility and devotion at her feet. I hope I have avoided the snare of longwindedness, into which I am, I fear, only too prone to fall. What I have said, I have said because I felt I must, inasmuch as I was compelled to do so by the thought of the splendid and incomparable qualities of her mind and person; they alone have afforded me ample material, and moreover, I have throughout only written concerning that of which I was myself a witness. Anything that hap-

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pened before my time I have learned from the mouths of the most illustrious witnesses, and thus, as ever, the sources of my information do not admit of question or doubt as to their veracity.

Of Queen Catherine nothing more true than the following could have been written:—

*‘Ceste regne qui fut de tant de roys la mère,
Et de reynes aussi, ensemble de la France,
Mourut lors qu’on avait d’elle le plus d’affaire;
Car nul qu’elle n’a pu luy donner assistance.’*

CHAPTER III

MARY STUART, QUEEN OF SCOTLAND,
SOMETIME QUEEN OF FRANCE

ANYONE who desired to write of this famous Queen of Scotland would have two subjects of which to treat, both likely to lead to an interesting discourse: he might write of her life or of the manner of her death, and in both cases he would see how badly fortune served the poor lady, even as I intend to show, by touching on one or two points in this short narrative, written in the form of an abridged and not by any means a complete history; the latter I leave to the more learned and the more practised in the art of writing.

The father of Queen Mary was King James, a good and brave man and a true friend to France, as he had good reason to be. After the death of his first wife, Madame Magdelaine, a daughter of France, he begged King François to let him take to wife another virtuous and comely princess of his realm, saying that he wished for nothing better than to continue his alliance with France.

King François could think of no better choice to make for this good prince than that of Marie de Lorraine, daughter of the Duc de Guise, and widow

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by then of the late M. de Longueville, a modest, virtuous and comely lady. King James was well content with the choice, and esteemed himself indeed a lucky man to come by so fair a wife. He considered himself still more fortunate after he had married her, and all the people of Scotland thought the same when, on his death, which befell shortly after their union, she took the government into her own hands and proved herself an extremely able ruler; nor did she fail to bring issue to her husband, the beautiful, the most beautiful princess of all that lived at that time, the Queen of whom I am about to speak. No sooner was the young princess born than the English invaded Scotland with all their accustomed fury, and the poor mother, in terror for the life of her child, hid her now in one part of Scotland, now in another; indeed, but for the help sent by our good King Henri, it would have gone hard with them both. At length things came to such a pass that the Queen was compelled to put the child on board ship and, exposing her to all the fury of the waves, the tempests and the winds of the raging sea, send her to seek safety in France. Ill fortune could not follow her across the sea; for a time good fortune took her by the hand and led her gently through the pleasant lands of France. And as the maiden grew, men saw how lovely she was and how manifold were her virtues, so that when she reached the age of fifteen she shone as a bright star in the firmament of the Court and shed a dazzling light on all around her,

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a light that grew brighter even than the sun itself, so resplendent was her beauty. Nor was she less favoured in mind than in body; her knowledge of the Latin tongue was very thorough: when she was but in her fourteenth year she stood up before King Henri, the Queen, and all the Court, and publicly, in the great hall of the Louvre, gave a Latin oration which she had written herself and in which she maintained, in opposition to what was then the recognised opinion, that it was good for women to have a knowledge of letters and the liberal arts. What an inspiring sight it must have been to see this learned and beautiful Queen addressing so noble a company in Latin, a language which she could speak very well and understood thoroughly! She was well versed in the French language too. There still exists a speech prepared and delivered before her in French by Antoine Fochain, of Chauny en Vermandois, in order that she might the more easily understand it, as indeed she did, as clearly as if French had been her native language. It was a pleasure to see her conversing, whether with the highest or the lowest in the land. As long as she remained in France she reserved two hours of every day for study and reading; there was scarcely a subject of which she had not an excellent knowledge. Poetry was one of her chief delights, especially that of M. de Ronsard, M. du Bellay and M. de Maison-Fleur. All of these wrote very pretty verses on the subject of their lovely patroness, and when she quitted the land where she had found such happiness they made the sad occa-

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sion the subject of some very beautiful verse, which I have often myself seen her reading with tears in her eyes and sighs on her lips, both in France and in Scotland.

She was a poet herself, and composed lines that I consider to be very beautiful and in no way resembling those on Count Bothwell that have been attributed to her; these are, indeed, far too coarse and rough to have come from so refined and fair a princess. M. de Ronsard expressed himself as quite of my opinion as to these verses, when one day we were reading them together and discussing their merits. She wrote many charming verses; easily and quickly too, as I could judge for myself, for she would retire to her chamber and in a very short time return and read to any favoured friends that happened to be at hand what she had written. She was, moreover, a very fine writer of prose, and an especially good letter writer. I have read many high-spirited, eloquent and beautifully worded letters that have come from her pen. And on all occasions when she discoursed with anyone, she would adopt a method of speech that was at once in good taste, refined and attractive, and she always spoke in a charming manner, with dignity and discretion, and a modesty that left nothing to be desired. Even her native tongue, barbarous, ill-sounding and uncouth as it is, she spoke charmingly, so that with her (but not with others) it appeared to be a beautiful and melodious language.

What a gift! to be able to transform a coarse, barbaric tongue into the civilised speech of a gracious

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woman of the world! Nor is it to be wondered at that when she was dressed *à la sauvage* (as I have myself seen her) she appeared, in spite of her rough garb, a goddess straight from heaven. All who have seen her will agree with me, while those who have not been so fortunate will still say the same from having seen her portrait. And what must her appearance have been when she was arrayed in rich and lovely apparel, whether in French style or in Spanish, or with the little Italian bonnet perched on her curls, or in those other garments of pure white, which she wore as mourning and in which she looked no more nor less than ravishingly beautiful, the whiteness of her skin vying with the whiteness of her veil, and even surpassing it in purity, so that in the end men had eyes but for the fairness of her pure white skin.

Her voice, too, was calculated to set the hearts of men aglow, for its tones were full and round, and yet very gentle and sweet. She was a charming singer, and accompanied herself upon the lute, fingering it prettily with her fair white hands, —hands every whit as beautiful as those of fair Aurora.

What more is there to say on the subject of her charms? only this, that the sun that warmed her Scottish kingdom resembled her not at all, for at some time of the year it hardly shines for five hours of the day, while she shone the whole day long, and shed the clear rays of her beauty upon her people and her people's country; they needed

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the brightness that emanated from their Queen the more, in that they seemed so far removed from the great sun of heaven. Ah! Scotland, methinks thy days must seem even shorter now than then, and thy nights more long, since thou hast lost the princess that lit up thy hills and crags! But thou didst prove thyself an ungrateful land, nor ever didst thou think of the debt of fidelity thou didst owe to thy fair Queen, as I shall show anon.

The fair lady so won the hearts of the French that it seemed good to King Henri to give her in marriage to his dearly loved son, M. le Dauphin, who, for his part, was deeply enamoured of her charms. The wedding was celebrated with all solemnity in the great church of Paris, when the Queen appeared a hundred times more lovely than a goddess from heaven, whether in the morning, when she stood before the altar in simple dignity, or in the afternoon, at the ball given in her honour, or in the evening when, with modest and retiring mien, she proceeded to fulfil the vows she had made to the great God of Marriage. The words of a certain song were on this occasion heard on the lips of all, throughout the great city itself and among the Court, which described how truly blest was the prince who was mated with so lovely a princess, adding that if the realm of Scotland were a thing of price of how far greater worth was the Queen, for, even if she had had no sceptre in her hand nor crown upon her head, her person alone, her divine beauty, would have been worth a kingdom in itself,

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but, seeing she was Queen as well, she brought a twofold blessing to her spouse.

Thus was she spoken of; she was styled by the French 'Reine Dauphine,' and her husband 'Roi Dauphin,' and together they lived in pleasant harmony, for they loved each other dearly.

When the great King Henri died they would have become King and Queen of France—King and Queen of two great kingdoms, and ever happier and happier, had not the King her husband been carried off by death and she, in consequence, made a widow in the springtime of her young life; the poor young couple had but four years of felicity together, truly a happiness of short duration, which Fortune might well have spared to the princess; but the fickle goddess seemed intent on treating her ill, poor lady! Her sorrow was made manifest in the paleness of her cheeks, for, from the time of her widowhood, I for my part never saw colour in her face again, and often had I the honour of observing her, both in France and in Scotland, whither she was obliged to betake herself at the end of eighteen months, to her own great regret, in order to pacify her kingdom, torn as it was by religious differences. Alas! she had little wish to make the journey. Again and again did I hear her bewail her fate, and cry out that she dreaded the journey more than she dreaded death itself, and that she would a thousand times rather remain in France a simple dowager, well content with Touraine and Poitou, possessions that had come to her on her marriage, than go to reign

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in a savage land over a fierce and barbarous people. But her uncles—some, at least, if not all—advised her to go, nay, they urged her even (I need not describe the occasion), and bitterly afterwards did they repent of the advice they had given her.

There is no doubt whatever that, had the late King Charles, her brother-in-law, been, at the time of her departure, of a riper age (he was but a mere youth at the time), and had he been in love with her then as I myself know he was in later years, he would never have let her go, but would have married her then and there. A few years later he was so deeply in love with his fair sister-in-law that he never saw her picture as it hung upon the wall but he stopped in front of it and gazed longingly upon it; he seemed unable to tear himself away from it, and used often to say that Queen Mary was the most beautiful princess that had ever been born, and that he considered the late King, his brother, a truly fortunate man in that he had been blessed with the possession of so lovely a wife, adding that he ought in no way to regret his death when he lay in his grave, for that he had in his lifetime been the happy owner of such great beauty, and enjoyed happiness that was worth more than a whole kingdom.

Had she, as I have said, remained longer in France, King Charles must in the end have married her—indeed, he had made up his mind to do so, in spite of the fact that she was his sister-in-law. The Pope in those days never refused his sanction to such a marriage; he had granted permission to one

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of his subjects, the late M. de Lové, to marry his sister-in-law, and further, in later years, in Spain, the Marquis d'Aguilar received permission to do the same, and many others also in that country.

Queen Mary at last made up her mind to return to her kingdom, and decided to make a start in the spring, but, putting off the day from month to month, she only made her departure at the end of the month of August. It is worth noticing that the spring of this year, when she was purposing to set out, was a very late and cold and miserable one, and that the month of April seemed to be making no steps to clothe herself in her wonted garb of fresh green and bright flowers. The young gallants of the Court augured therefrom that this particular springtime had changed its fair and pleasant season into a dark and gloomy winter, not wishing to clothe itself in its usual bright colours now that the fair young Queen was about to leave a land she had cheered so bravely with her presence. M. de Maison-Fleur wrote a very beautiful elegy describing the mourning of this springtime for the Queen's departure.

At length, at the beginning of the autumn, the Queen, finding it was not possible to put off her visit to Scotland any longer, set out by land for Calais, accompanied by M. de Nemours, her uncles, and the principal ladies and gentlemen of the Court, all of whom were deeply affected by the thought that they were so soon to lose sight of their dear Queen. In the harbour at Calais were two packet-boats lying at anchor, one belonging to

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M. de Mevillon and the other to Captain Albize, and two barges, in which her luggage and possessions had already been stowed away. After spending six days at Calais, she reluctantly bade farewell to all who were in attendance upon her, forgetting none, in spite of her great grief, and went on board, having decided that three of her uncles should go with her on her journey, M. d'Aumale, the Grand Prior, M. d'Elbeuf, and M. d'Amville, the same that is to-day the Constable of France. Many of us of the nobility accompanied her also, in M. de Mevillon's packet, which was the better and finer vessel of the two.

Just as she had expressed her readiness to set off, and the oars were dipping into the water, there came into full view a vessel that had got clear of the harbour and was about to take to the open sea, when it was suddenly caught by the current and, capsizing, sank before her eyes, together with the majority of the crew. The Queen, when she saw the catastrophe, straightway cried out: 'Oh, Heaven! what an omen for my journey!' On leaving the harbour a fresh breeze sprang up, and filled the sails, so that the rowers rested upon their oars. The Queen, having no thought for aught else, went towards the stern of the vessel, and, resting both her arms upon the side, gave way to her grief and wept long and bitterly, keeping her eyes fixed the while upon the land she was leaving behind, and murmuring again and again, in tones of ineffable sadness: 'Farewell, France; France, farewell!' She remained thus for five hours, until

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the night began to fall and her people asked her whether she would not come away and partake of some supper. Whereupon, dissolving again into tears, she exclaimed: 'The hour is at hand, my beloved France, when I must lose sight of thee for ever, for dark night is jealous, and casts a black veil before my eyes to deprive me of what contentment I had in watching thee slowly recede before my eyes. Farewell, beloved, I shall never see thee more!'

She then withdrew, remarking that Dido, when Æneas took leave of her, kept her eyes ever upon the sea, while she did just the opposite, having no thoughts but for the land. After she had refused to eat anything but a salad, she expressed her willingness to retire, but as she would not consent to go below, the crew arranged a bed for her upon the deck in the rear of the vessel; she slept but little, spending the night in moaning and weeping. She bade the helmsman wake her as soon as it was day, in case it were still possible to see the land of France, and to have no fears in rousing her. Fortune favoured her, for the wind dropped and but little progress was made during the night, so that France was still visible at daybreak. The helmsman did not fail to carry out her orders, and when she was awakened she sat up in her bed and again gazed at the shores of France until they had passed completely out of sight. As the boat pursued its way, her sorrow became more and more manifest, and she sat on deck, a pitiful figure, sadly repeating the words: 'Farewell, my France! I fear I shall never see thee more.'

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Earnestly did she pray that a British vessel might be sighted (we were at that time sorely threatened by the English) and an attack made upon her, and she be forced to take refuge in the port whence she had set sail the day before; but in this Heaven did not see fit to gratify her desires, for we came at length, without any mishap, to the port of Leith. While we were still upon the journey, I observed the following pretty incident: on the first night, Seigneur de Chastelard—he who was afterwards put to death in Scotland on account of his extreme arrogance and not for any crime, as I shall myself show, seeing that he was a gentle knight, a fine swordsman and a man of considerable culture—when he saw that they were setting light to the ship's lantern, was heard to exclaim: 'Surely we have no need of lantern or torch to light us on our way, for the bright eyes of our Queen are brilliant enough to light up the whole sea, nay, even, if need be, to kindle it into a burning flame.'

It is perhaps worthy of record that on the day before we arrived off the coast of Scotland, which happened to be a Sunday, so thick a fog settled over everything that it was impossible to see from one end of the ship to the other, greatly to the astonishment of the crew and the confusion of the pilot. There was nothing left for us to do but to drop anchor immediately and endeavour to ascertain whereabouts we lay.

The fog lasted for the whole of that day and night, until eight o'clock next morning, when, as it lifted, we found ourselves surrounded by masses

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of rocks, so that had we attempted to go forward we must inevitably have struck one of them and gone to the bottom. Upon this, the Queen was heard to remark that for her part she cared not what risks were taken, for she wished for nothing so much as for death. When, on the morning on which the fog lifted, the coast of Scotland came into view, there was no lack of those who saw in the fog an omen of evil augury, signifying that they were about to set foot in a land that was fog-ridden, gloomy, and ill-content.

As we approached the port of Leith, where we intended to land, the principal citizens of Leith and Edinburgh hastened to welcome their Queen to the shores of her native land. We stayed only two hours at Leith, and then set out along the road to Edinburgh, which was situated at a short distance from the harbour. The Queen rode on horseback and her ladies and gentlemen on the geldings of the district, harnessed and caparisoned in true Scottish fashion.

On casting her eye back over the mournful procession the Queen was actually moved to tears, as she called to mind the pomp and magnificence, and the splendid horses and litters that would have formed part of a similar procession in France, where she had passed so many happy days. 'But,' said she, 'there is no way out of it. I must exchange paradise for purgatory, and can but pray Heaven for patience to support my lot.'

But worse was in store for her; in the evening, just as she was about to retire to rest (she was

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lodged in Holyrood Palace, which is certainly a very fine building, in no way resembling the country over which it casts so noble a shadow), there came beneath her window some five or six hundred youths from the town of Edinburgh to serenade her with evil-sounding violins and similar instruments, of which there is no lack in this country, and they began to chant hymns, alas! with as little knowledge of harmony as it was possible to have. What music for a tired ear! What a lullaby for a first night in Scotland!

On the following morning they threatened to put her almoner to death immediately in front of the windows of her rooms; had he not made good his escape by flying to her for protection he must surely have been killed, in the same way that, later, her secretary David really was killed; this was the secretary whom the Queen had liked for the clever way in which he managed her affairs. They killed him in her own chamber, when he was standing so close to her that his blood spurted on to her dress as he fell dead at her feet.

‘What an indignity!’ you may well exclaim. Poor lady, that was not the only one she had to suffer; no wonder they spoke ill of her, seeing that they treated her so badly. At the attack made upon her almoner she became so angry, and withal so sad, that she exclaimed: ‘Truly, a fine example of the obedience my subjects intend to give to my wishes! I know not what will be the end, but that it will be an evil end I have little doubt.’ The poor princess proved a second

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Cassandra in this prophecy; indeed, it was not only in beauty that she resembled the famous prophetess.

Arrived in Scotland, she dwelt there for about three years in virtuous widowhood, in which she would have persisted, having no wish but to remain true to the shade of her departed husband; but the ministers of her realm begged and implored her to marry again, in order that she might leave behind her a noble heir to the throne, as in due course she did. There are some who say that, at the time of the earliest of the wars waged by him, the King of Navarre had expressed a wish to marry her himself, repudiating his wife on account of her religion. But the Queen refused to give her consent to such a proceeding, protesting that she had a soul, and would not risk the loss of it for all the honours in the world: she scrupled to marry a man who was already married.

Eventually she gave her hand to a young English nobleman of a very ancient house but not, it is true, equal to her own. This marriage with her cousin, Henry Darnley, did not prove a happy one for either. I do not propose to go into the details of his murder; history has written an account of it in full—although not a true one, in that it includes the accusation that the Queen was privy to the murder. Suffice it to say that, after she had borne him a very fine child, the same who reigns to-day as James I. of England, he was done to death in his own apartments.

To say that the Queen had a hand in this foul

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murder is a shameful slander; at no time in her life was she known to be cruel, but always kindly and gentle to all with whom she came in contact. Never during her sojourn in France was she known to sanction any act of cruelty; indeed, unlike so many of the great men and women of her day (whom I have seen on such occasions), she could never bring herself to be present at the execution of a condemned criminal; or again, when she was on board ship, she would never consent to the beating of a single convict if he dallied over his task; she used to beg her uncle, M. le Grand Prieur, not to allow the crew to be flogged, and always gave orders to that effect to the captain, so tender and compassionate was her nature.

And what is more, it is impossible that cruelty could exist together with such true beauty. Those who have charged her with cruelty, in particular the famous poet and historian George Buchanan, who wrote such scurrilous libels against Mary Stuart in prison, are nothing but impostors. The poet referred to, especially, would have better employed his divine gift and his great learning in speaking well of her; instead of troubling to go into the matter of her amours with Bothwell, and proving that certain sonnets on that subject were written by her, sonnets that those who know her other writings are agreed could not have come from her pen. This Bothwell was one of the ugliest and most ill-favoured men imaginable. It is evident that her enemies at this time were bent on trying to ruin her, which, indeed, later on, they succeeded

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in doing only too well, and so bitterly did they persecute her that in the end they succeeded in getting her shut up in a strong castle, at St Andrews, in Scotland. After having been kept in miserable captivity for nearly a year, she was set at liberty through the agency of a very brave gentleman of an ancient and noble house of Scotland, whom I myself had the pleasure of knowing, and from whose own lips I heard the whole story of the escape of the Queen when he came to France to tell the news to the King. He was a nephew of the Bishop of Glasgow, ambassador in France, one of those worthy prelates and solid men of property who are now hardly ever to be found. He was a faithful servant to his mistress until the day of her death, and now that she is no more he is no less faithful to her memory.

No sooner was the Queen again at liberty than, in less time than it takes to recount it, she had got together an army composed of all upon whose fidelity she thought she could best rely. She set herself at the head of this body, mounted on a noble steed, and clad only in a simple habit of white taffetas, with a cap of white crêpe upon her head. Many people, including the Queen-Mother herself, wondered how a princess who had been so tenderly nurtured, and had all her life been so delicate, could thus expose herself to the hardships and dangers of war. But what is there a queen would not endure to regain her authority and re-establish her dominion or to avenge herself upon a rebellious

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people and reduce them to a state of loyalty and obedience to her rule?

Thus, then, do we picture our Queen, beautiful and noble-hearted as she ever was, mounted like a second Zenobia at the head of her army, ready to lead it against her enemies and give battle to her foes. But, alas! how unfortunate was this princess in all she undertook. At the very moment when she thought her men were about to encounter the enemy, and she was exhorting them with the bravest words she had at her command, words that might have moved the very stones to rise up and fight, they all lowered their pikes and refused to stir! Both parties laid down their arms and, mingling one with the other, embraced and made friends. Then they all combined to seize the person of the Queen and take her a prisoner to England. M. de Cros, Comptroller of her Household, a nobleman of Auvergne, recounted these facts to the Queen-Mother; I myself saw him at Saint-Maur, and he told me the same tale.

At length Queen Mary was taken to England, and closely confined in a castle, from which she never stirred for some eighteen to twenty long weary years, until her death, in fact, to which she was eventually sentenced for reasons that were all clearly stated at her trial. One of the principal reasons, however, was (and I have this on good authority) that the Queen of England never liked her, and was always jealous of her beauty, which far surpassed her own. How dreadful a thing is jealousy!

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However that may be, and whatever may have been the real reason, it is enough for us to know that this princess, after her long imprisonment, was condemned to suffer death by execution, and that her fate was announced to her two months before her death took place. But there are some who say she knew nothing of it until she was summoned to the block. Others, as I have said, assert that she was told that she was to die two months before her execution, even as the Queen-Mother was informed of it at Cognac, to her great grief and horror. Queen Catherine received this further item of news at the same time—namely, that as soon as the decision was pronounced, her room and even her bed were heavily draped in black. The Queen-Mother, when she heard this, praised the fortitude of the Queen of Scotland, saying that she had never seen or heard of anyone who had preserved a braver front in the face of adversity. I was present at the time, but I thought then that the Queen of England would not persist in her intention of putting Queen Mary to death, for I did not think her capable of such cruelty. She was not, as a rule, given to cruelty, but in this case she seemed to act contrary to her natural disposition. I hoped too that M. de Bellièvre, whom the King had despatched to England in the hope of saving Mary's life, might effect something; but all his efforts were in vain.

We come now to her death, which it is impossible to describe without being torn by feelings of the deepest pity for the poor victim. On the 17th of February, of the year 1587, there came to the place

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where the Queen was a prisoner, in the castle of Fotheringay, emissaries sent by the Queen of England (I will not give their names, for it would serve no purpose here). They arrived between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, and in the presence of her gaoler or keeper, one Paulet, informed the prisoner of their orders touching her execution, and declared that they would proceed with it on the following morning, and bade her hold herself in readiness between seven and eight o'clock.

The Queen showed no surprise, but thanked the men for the good news they had brought her, saying that nothing could be more acceptable to her than death, which would put an end to all her miseries, and that she had long ago been ready to die, and was resolved sooner or later to make away with herself. Nevertheless she implored the Queen's messengers to allow her a little time and leisure in which to make her will and set her affairs in order, seeing that, in the terms of their message, it lay in their power to grant her her request. But at this Lord Shrewsbury burst in somewhat rudely: 'No, no, madam, you must die. Be ready between seven and eight to-morrow morning; we cannot allow you a moment longer than that.' There was one among them who seemed more courteous than the rest, and who endeavoured to prepare her as well as he could for the terrible ordeal she was about to undergo, but she told him she stood in no need of consolation, but that if, in his kindness, he would send her confessor to her he would be doing her a service

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greater than any other she could think of; adding that, in respect of her body, she did not suppose her executioners meant to be so inhuman as to refuse it burial. But she was told that she must not expect a visit from her confessor, and she was compelled to write down her confession herself; it is as follows:—

‘I have this day been taken to task on account of my religion, and on the subject of receiving the consolation accorded, as some think, to heretics. You will hear from Bourgoing and others that I have made a true confession of my faith, in the hope of which I am prepared to die. I requested that you might come to me to hear my last words and administer the Sacrament, but that was cruelly denied me; I have not been allowed to make my will freely and without restraint, nor to write anything except through the hands of my gaolers; ordinary consolation I have been refused, and can only add here that I confess the heinousness of my sins in general, as I had hoped to do to you, in particular and in private, begging you in the name of God to watch and pray with me to-night for the absolution of my sins, and to send me your pardon for all the wrongs I have done. I shall endeavour to see you in the presence of my keepers; they have promised that I may do so; if they keep their promise I shall, before everyone, implore forgiveness for my sins. I beg you to instruct me as to the best prayers for this night and to-morrow morning, for the time is short and I have no leisure to write more. I shall provide for you, as for the

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rest, and shall take especial care that your benefice may be assured to you, and I shall recommend you to the King for protection. I have no more time; send me word at once of all I must do to save my soul alive.'

After she had written this she lost no time, for little remained to her (and yet there was time enough to shake the fortitude of the bravest heart, but she seemed to have in her no fear of death whatever, only infinite contentment at leaving the miseries of this world behind her), she lost no time, I say, in writing to our King, to the Queen-Mother, for whom she had ever a great respect, to Monsieur and Madame de Guise, and to several others. Her letters were very pathetic, but in all she emphasised the fact that, even to the last hour of her life, she had been mindful of them, and that she was happy in at last being able to escape from the evils that had surrounded her for one and twenty years. She sent to all her friends presents that were of considerable value, considering that they came from the hand of a captive queen whom fortune had long ago forsaken.

After that she sent for all the members of her household, from the highest to the humblest, and, opening her coffers, counted out the money still remaining to her, and distributed it among them according to their deserts; and with her women she shared jewels and trinkets and the few ornaments that were still in her possession. She told each one of them the same thing: how that she regretted that she had no more to give them in reward for

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their services, but that she felt sure that her son would sooner or later make amends to them. She then went on to implore her steward to bear to her son her last blessing and bid him not to think of avenging her death, but to leave that in the hands of God to arrange according to His almighty will. She bade farewell to all the company without shedding a tear; on the contrary, she endeavoured to console them, assuring them that they need not weep to see her happy in exchanging the manifold misfortunes she had endured for the peace of death; then all, except her women, left the room.

Night had now fallen, and the Queen retired to her oratory, and there, for the space of two hours, with bare knees pressed against the cold ground, she prayed to God to help her in her tribulation; in the meantime her women watched by her side. She then returned to her room and said to them: 'I think, friends, it were better that I should eat something, and then endeavour to sleep, lest I do anything to-morrow unworthy of me, or lest my heart fail me at the last.' What splendid courage was hers! She partook of some roast meat and a little wine, and then retired to rest, but she slept little, spending the night in prayer.

She arose two hours before dawn, and dressed herself as carefully as she could—better, in fact, than usual—choosing a gown of black velvet, which was the last of the fine apparel that remained to her, and saying to her women; 'Friends, I would have preferred to have left you this gown rather than that which I handed over to you yester even,

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but I feel that I ought to go to my death honourably apparelled, wearing something somewhat out of the ordinary. Here, too, is a handkerchief which I have kept back, and which will serve to bandage my eyes when I arrive at the scaffold; I give it to you, my dear' (turning to one of the women), 'for I would receive this last kind office at your hands.'

After that she again withdrew to her oratory, having bidden her women farewell and kissed them all tenderly. She gave them many messages for the King, the Queen, and all her relations, but there was nothing in all that she said calculated to encourage them to avenge her miserable death; on the contrary, her messages were all of love. She partook of the Sacrament by means of a consecrated Host sent by good Pope Pius V. to serve her in case of need, which she had been careful to preserve in all sanctity.

She then went through all her prayers, and so long did they take that it was already broad daylight when she returned to the room and sat down by the fire, and began again to chat with her women, and console them, telling them that the pleasures of this world were naught, and that she hoped to set an example to the great ones of the world, as well as to the less; that she, who had been Queen of the kingdoms of France and Scotland—by right of birth in the one case and by fortune in the other—and who had in her time rejoiced in all the honours befitting to her state, was now brought so low as to have fallen into the hands of the executioner; still, her consolation was

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that she knew herself to be innocent of any crime. The most cogent reason her enemies had for putting her to death was her religion, the good and holy Catholic religion, which she would never to her last hour abandon, inasmuch as it was the religion in which she had been baptised, and she wished for no greater glory after her death than for it to be published abroad throughout the whole of France that she had remained steadfast to her faith. She went on to implore her women to do this for her, and asked them, although she knew that their hearts would be torn by the sight of her upon the scaffold, to bear witness that she behaved nobly to the last; no truer testimony than theirs could she hope to have.

No sooner had she finished speaking than there came a rude knock at the door. Her women, thinking her hour had come, made as if they would bar the entrance to the room, but she said to them: 'Friends, 'twould avail you nothing; open the door.'

The first to enter was a servant, bearing in his hand a white rod, and he, without addressing himself directly to anyone, said, as he walked into the room: 'It is come, it is come.' The Queen, thinking that he was in this way announcing that the hour of her death was at hand, took up a small ivory cross that lay beside her.

After that the emissaries aforementioned appeared at the door, and when they had come into the room the Queen said to them: 'Well, gentlemen, so you have come for me! I am ready, and quite pre-

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pared to die; methinks my fair sister the Queen is about to do me a great kindness. Come, friends, let us go.' All present were astounded at her fortitude and gentle dignity; never before had she seemed more lovely, for she had a colour in her cheeks that enhanced her natural beauty.

It is thus that Boccaccio wrote of Sophonisba when she was in trouble after the capture of her husband and the fall of the town. Speaking of it to Massinissa he says: 'One would have said that her very grief rendered her more beautiful, and, if that were possible, even more desirable, by softening the features of her lovely face.'

The emissaries were moved to compassion; and yet, as she was preparing to depart, they made as though they would prevent her women from following her, fearing lest by their sighs and lamentations and bitter cries the executioner might be hindered in his task; but she turned on them roundly: 'What, gentlemen!' she said, 'am I to be used so hardly that even my women may not accompany me to the scaffold? Grant me this small favour at least, I beg you.' And they granted it, on her promising that she would enjoin them to silence if it should be necessary.

The execution was arranged to take place in the hall, in the middle of which a large scaffold, twelve square feet in area, and two feet in height, had been erected, and covered with some ugly, black, coarse material.

The Queen entered this hall with such majesty and grace that one would have thought she was

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entering a ballroom, and as she looked round the room it was observed that her countenance never changed.

As she approached the scaffold she summoned her steward to her side and said to him: 'Help me to mount; it is the last service I shall ever receive at your hands,' and then went on to repeat to him all the messages she had given to him for her son. Then, when she was actually upon the scaffold, she asked for her confessor, begging the officers who stood by to let him come to her; but this request was refused her outright. The Earl of Kent went so far as to remark that he grieved to see her thus given up to the superstitious practices of past times, and that she ought to carry the cross of our Saviour in her heart, not in her hand (referring to the ivory cross she carried). To this she made answer that she would indeed be sorry to carry so beautiful an emblem in her hand if she bore no image of it in her heart as well; and what all Christian people held most sacred was the having of the true mark of their redemption upon them when they were threatened with death. Seeing that her confessor was not to be allowed to come to her, she begged that her women might approach, according to the promise she had received; this was allowed, and one of the women, as she entered the hall, and saw her mistress upon the scaffold, and the executioner beside her, could not refrain from crying out and uttering a deep groan; but the Queen immediately made a sign to her, putting her finger upon her mouth, and the woman was silent.

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Her Majesty then proceeded to make certain asseverations, thinking it her duty to do so. She said that she had never had designs on the State, nor on the life of the Queen; but confessed to having attempted to regain her liberty—as what captive would not? She saw well enough that the real reason of her death was her religion, and she felt happy in meeting her end for so noble a cause; she begged the Queen to have pity on those of her poor serving men and women whom she still held prisoners, in consideration of the affection they had had for their unfortunate mistress, saying that it was that and that alone which had induced them to endeavour to help her to regain her liberty.

A minister was brought to her, to exhort her in the faith to which he himself clung, but she said to him in English: ‘Ah! my friend, bear with me,’ and gave him clearly to understand that she wished to have nothing to do with any of his sect, that she was ready to die, and had no need of advice from him; not he nor any of his kind could bring consolation or peace to her soul.

In spite of her protestations, he persisted in repeating prayers over her in his own language, so that in self-defence she began to go through her own prayers once more, in Latin, raising her voice to such a pitch that it rose above that of the worthy divine. She said again how happy she was in shedding her blood for the sake of her religion, instead of continuing to live, and waiting for nature to run its appointed course, and that she

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put all her trust in Him who lay stretched upon the cross she held in her hand and at whose feet she now knelt, praying that this her death, suffered in His name, might lead her to life eternal in company with the blest and bring her cleansed from sin before the throne of God.

Such were the prayers she uttered, with an unfaltering voice, upon her knees before the scaffold; they came from a brave heart, that never flinched. She added several others; one for the Pope, one for the Kings of France and of Spain, and even one for the Queen of England, praying God to shed the light of His Holy Spirit upon her; she prayed too for her son, and for the people of England and Scotland, that they might become converted from their faith and find grace.

That done, she summoned her women to come and help her remove her black veil, and her head-dress and her ornaments. When the executioner came up and attempted to lay hands upon her she cried out: 'Ah! friend, do not touch me, I pray!' Yet after all she could not prevent him from touching her, for when she had turned down the bodice of her gown as far as the waist, the wretch took her roughly by the arm and proceeded to remove her doublet, and her low-necked bodice, so that her neck and beautiful bosom, whiter than alabaster, were left entirely bare.

She herself endeavoured to arrange her apparel as quickly as she could, saying that she was not accustomed to undress in public, before so large a company (it is said that there were some four to

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five hundred people present), nor to employ the services of such a waiting-maid.

The executioner threw himself upon his knees and implored her to pardon him. She replied that she did so willingly—as willingly, indeed, as she pardoned the authors of her death, and with as good a grace as she hoped would be accorded to her when she begged of God forgiveness for her sins.

She then turned to the woman to whom she had entrusted the handkerchief, asking her to give it to her.

She was wearing a gold cross, to which had been fixed some of the wood of the real cross of the Saviour, together with the image of our Lord, which she wished to bequeath to one of her maidens, but the executioner would not allow her to give it to her, in spite of the fact that her Majesty begged him to allow her to do so, assuring him that the damsel would pay him three times its value for the coveted souvenir.

When all was ready she embraced each one of her women in turn and gave them, with her blessing, permission to retire, after having made the sign of the cross over them. Seeing that one of them could not refrain from uttering her grief aloud, the Queen commanded her to be silent, reminding them all once more of the promise she had made on their behalf and bidding them withdraw quietly and go and pray to God for her soul's sake and to bear faithful witness of the manner of her death and testify that she died true to the Holy Catholic Faith.

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When one of her women had bound the handkerchief over her eyes, the Queen threw herself upon her knees, without showing the least sign of fear.

Her great fortitude moved the whole company to compassion, even the bitterest among her enemies, who had only come to see her die. Hardly a soul could keep from weeping at the sorry spectacle, or from condemning what in their hearts they could not but feel was a grave injustice.

And inasmuch as in her last hour the ministers of Satan importuned her, desiring that her soul should perish together with her body, she raised her voice bravely to surmount their promptings and repeated in Latin the psalm: '*In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in æternum*' from beginning to end. When she had finished, she laid her head upon the block and, as she repeated softly to herself: '*In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum*,' the executioner brought his axe down upon her neck with a mighty blow and, raising it again, struck two more blows before her head was completely severed, thus rendering her martyrdom even greater than it need have been; except that, after all, it is not the death agony that makes the martyr, but the cause.

This done, the executioner took her head in his hand, and, lifting it up so that it might be seen by all who were present, said: 'God save Queen Elizabeth! May thus perish all who are enemies of the Holy Gospel!' And as he spoke, he tore off the cap the Queen had worn, and showed her hair, that had already turned white; yet she had not shrunk from

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displaying her white hair during her captivity; only had she ceased any longer to curl it as in the day when it was so fair and beautiful; for it was not old age that had changed its colour (she was not forty when she died), but all the sadness, the misery and the weariness of her life and long imprisonment.

When the wretched tragedy was over, her poor women, jealous for their mistress's honour, came to the gaoler and implored him to forbid the executioner to touch the body of the Queen and allow them to arrange it for burial, after all the company had departed, in order that it might have no indignity of any kind put upon it, promising to hand over whatever he might choose to claim when they had completed their task. But the wretch bade them begone and commanded them to leave the hall immediately.

In the meantime the executioner undressed the body and dragged it about at will. It was said that he even did what the wretched muleteer in the '*Cent Nouvelles de la Reyne de Navarre*' did to the poor woman he put to death. Men have been known to fall a prey to stranger temptations even than that.

The body was then conveyed to an adjoining room, which was carefully closed, lest any friend of the Queen might get in and perform some pious office to the dead. This only increased the misery of her women, for they could see the body through a hole in the door, lying just as it had been thrown down, half covered with a coarse piece of stuff torn

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from a billiard-table. What brutal indifference, not to say spiteful animosity, to refuse it even a decent covering of black!

The body of the poor Queen lay thus for some considerable time, until it began to decay, and the attendants were compelled to embalm it. It was laid in a coffin of lead, and kept for seven months, and then laid in unconsecrated ground in the cathedral at Peterborough. It is true the church is dedicated to Saint Peter, and that Queen Catherine of Spain lies buried there, although a Catholic; but for all that it is a profane temple, as are all the churches in England.

Some say, and among them some of those Englishmen who have made a study of the Queen's death and its causes, that the executioner sold his right to despoil the body for the value in money of her habiliments and ornaments. Her friends, they say, succeeded in persuading him to come to some such arrangement, as in the case of the Spaniards when Francisco Pizarro was put to death.

The black cloth that covered the scaffold, and even the boards of the latter and the paving-stones of the hall, and anything else that was stained with blood, were either washed or burnt, for fear lest they might later on be used by the superstitious—that is to say, lest some devout Catholic might some day buy the relics and exhibit them with all respect, honour, and reverence, as the good fathers of old were wont to do with the relics of the early Christian martyrs. But it was not thus that heretics acted in these times: '*Quia omnia quæ martyrurum*

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erant, cremabant, as Eusebius tells us, 'et cineres in Rhodonum spargebant, ut cum corporibus interiret eorum quoque memoria.' But, nevertheless, the memory of this Queen, in spite of all, will live for ever.

Such is the story of her death, which I have taken from two of her women, who were present; honest women, certainly, faithful to their mistress, and obedient to her commands, in that they bore witness to her fortitude and her zeal for the faith in which she had been brought up. When they had lost their mistress they returned to France, for they were Frenchwomen; one was the daughter of Mademoiselle de Raré, whom I have also seen, in France, in the capacity of lady-in-waiting to Queen Mary. I think these two damsels would have touched the hardest hearts by their tears and the pitiful way in which they gave their impressions of the sad tragedy.

I have also gathered a good deal from a book entitled '*Le Martyre de la Regne d'Escosse, Douairière de France.*' Alas! how little did it profit her that she had once been our Queen! It seems to me that the fact that she had been Queen of France should have made her enemies fear to put her to death: doubtless it would, had our King shown himself other than entirely indifferent to the poor lady's fate; but at that time he was full of hatred for Messieurs de Guise, and all connected with them, and troubled himself but little or not at all with Queen Mary.

But some, on the other hand, say that he took

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great offence at the deed. The truth is that he sent M. de Bellièvre, one of the greatest and most prudent of his ambassadors, to the Queen of England, and he cannot have failed to put forth every possible argument in favour of the Queen's acquittal, coupled with prayers, and even threats, from the King. Among other things, he is said to have alleged that it was no part of the duty of a king or a queen to put another king or queen to death, and that none but God Almighty had any power or authority over them. In angry tones he recounted the history of Conradin, who was executed at Naples, and threatened the Queen with a punishment similar to that which befell those who were responsible for that awful deed. Inasmuch as the case is a parallel one, and no less pitiful a tale than that of our Queen, I have been persuaded to include it in this place.

Conradin, a young nobleman, and a son of Henry, eldest son of Frederick II., passed over into Italy in company with one of his relations, the Duke of Austria, and, with a very large army of Germans and others at his back, attempted to regain possession of Naples and Sicily, which, he maintained, were his by right of inheritance from his grandfather and his uncles. Charles, Duke of Anjou, first King of Naples, was within an ace of losing his kingdom, but eventually Conradin was defeated, and, being betrayed by his men into the hands of the enemy, both he and his cousin were taken prisoner—how, I need not retail, for it would serve no purpose here. The King kept them close

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prisoners for the space of a year, at the conclusion of which, on the 26th of October, hangings of crimson velvet were erected in the market-place of Naples, on the very spot where, in later years, Conradin's mother erected the column in memory of her son, which stands in front of the Carmelite Church. Conradin and the Duke of Austria and some few others who had been kept prisoners were then brought out, while a great concourse of people, not French and Neapolitans only, but also citizens of all the neighbouring towns, gathered round and eagerly watched the preparations for the cruel deed that was about to be enacted. King Charles himself watched the spectacle from a distant tower.

When the prisoners had been brought forward, Master Robert de Barry, chief recorder to King Charles, mounted a flight of steps that had been especially erected to form a sort of rostrum, and pronounced sentence of death against the prisoners, for having disturbed the peace of the Church, falsely usurped the name of king, and waged war against the King's own person. To which, in Latin, Conradin made answer, to the following effect:—'Wretched traitor, you have condemned a king's son to death. Do you not know that a man has no power or authority over his equal, and cannot lightly put him to death?'

Then he went on to deny that he had any quarrel with the Church, but only wished to regain a kingdom that was his by right of inheritance, and from the possession of which he was wrongfully

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debarred; he had fair hopes that full revenge would be taken of his foul murder. Pulling his glove from his hand he cast it among the people, as an act of defiance, and cried out that he appointed Don Frederick of Castille, the son of his aunt, heir to all he possessed.

The glove was picked up by one of the nobles, who stood round, and afterwards taken to King Peter of Aragon.

First to suffer was the Duke of Austria, whose head was severed from his body, but, after it had been completely separated, he is said to have twice cried out: 'Maria, Maria!'

Conradin took the head up in his arms and embraced it tenderly, and, pressing it to his breast, he bewailed the fate of his poor companion, accusing himself of having been the cause of his death, for having dragged him from his mother's house and led him to destruction. Then he cast himself upon his knees, and, lifting his eyes to heaven, asked pardon for his misdeeds; at that moment the executioner struck off his head at a blow. The other prisoners met with a similar fate.

Their headless trunks lay for a long time on the ground, and no man was bold enough to touch them until Charles gave orders that they were to be buried.

Such was the pitiful end of young Prince Conradin, who was wept for and mourned by all who saw him die.

Several authors of this time, writing of the deed,

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blame Charles severely for having done to death so noble a young lord, asserting that it did not seem to them the act of a Christian king to give way to such cruelty. It is surely as great a thing to save the life of a noble lord as it is to conquer him in battle, and when the fight is over, the sword should be laid aside and not stained with Christian blood. Charles himself, taken before Damietta by the Saracens, together with King Louis, his brother, was treated as a king throughout his captivity, and eventually set free on payment of a ransom.

What is more, King Peter of Aragon reproached the said King Charles, in a letter, for not having observed such clemency towards Conradin as the Saracens had observed towards him, and added the words: '*Tu Nerone Neronior, et Saracenis crudelior*'—that is to say, 'Thou dost out-Nero Nero, and art more cruel than the Saracens.'

Robert, Count of Flanders, too, was so greatly offended at this murder that, filled with wrath, he pierced with his sword the man who read the sentence, killing him upon the spot, thinking that a man was not fit to live who, being himself of low-born origin, dared to pronounce sentence of death against a prince of so ancient a lineage.

The following is an account of the way in which this cruel death was avenged. After some little time, when King Charles had come to Bordeaux to fight in a combat that had been arranged between himself and King Peter, it fell out that his only son,

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Charles, Prince of Salerno, was taken prisoner in a grievous sea-fight which he had entered upon in direct opposition to his father's wishes. All the flower of the French nobility were taken at the same time, falling into the hands of Roger de Loria, Admiral of the Fleet to King Peter, and one after the other did they meet death at the headsman's axe. The slaughter took place at Messina, in the island of Sicily, and more than two hundred noblemen of France were slain—all to revenge the death of Prince Conradin.

Finally the people of Naples rebelled, and took up arms against their King, and he, arriving upon the scene of revolution when he was himself sick and ailing, fell into so grievous a state of melancholy that he had no longer strength to support life, but passed away, in his fifty-sixth year, after a reign of nineteen years, which had, on the whole, been peaceful enough. No sooner did the Sicilians get word of his death than they ran to the prison where still lay the miserable remnant of the poor French who had fallen into the hands of Roger de Loria, with the intention of putting them all to the sword without delay. And when, captives though they were, they had defended themselves valiantly for a time, their assailants put an end to the struggle by setting fire to the prison and burning them all. Truly a good revenge! After that all the Syndics of all the towns of Sicily met to sit in judgment upon Charles, Prince of Salerno, even after the same manner as his father, King Charles had sat in judgment upon Conradin; and all with

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one accord sentenced him to death by beheading, just as his father had sentenced Conradin.

When the judgment had been given, Queen Constance, one Friday morning, sent and announced his fate to the young prince, bidding him look to his soul's salvation, for that he must that day meet death in the same form as Conradin had met his. The prince replied in the following words:—‘I am content to endure this death in all fortitude and humility, remembering how even on such a day as this our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ suffered death upon the cross.’

When the Queen heard that he had made this reply she, being a good Christian, a devout, virtuous, and humble lady, said: ‘Inasmuch as the prince, having regard to the day, is prepared to meet death patiently and with docility, I for my part will take thought of Him who suffered on this day and have pity on the prince even as our Lord had pity on us, miserable sinners’; and she gave orders that he was to be kept in confinement, but his gaolers were to see that no harm came to him. The people, however, still clamoured for his death, and to set them at rest for the time being she told them that in so difficult a matter as this she felt she could do nothing without the knowledge and advice of King Peter, and gave further orders that the young prince should be carefully conveyed into Catalonia. This was done, and after that the matter was left in the hands of King Peter, who, after keeping the prince prisoner for four years, gave him back his liberty

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at last. All the histories of this period mention this.

As much credit came to the Queen for her compassion and gentle pity as bitter reproach to King Charles for having so cruelly shed the innocent blood of a young and royal prince.

So much for the history of Conradin's death. I cannot but think that just as Queen Constance won immortal fame by showing clemency in the case of young Prince Charles so would Queen Elizabeth of England have won glory for herself if she had granted pardon to the Queen of Scotland.

It is said that when Queen Elizabeth sent to poor Queen Mary to inform her of her impending fate she told her emissary to assure the Queen also that it was with very deep regret that she had come to such a decision, adding that she was acting under pressure from her Parliament. But Mary replied: 'Her power is far more autocratic than that. When it pleases her she can make her ministers do all that she wishes, for she is a princess who has made herself both feared and respected.'

I have had careful regard for the truth in all I have set down; time will reveal whether I have recorded what really occurred, and that only. In the meantime, may Queen Mary live in all honour and glory, both in this world and the next, until such time as some good Pope shall appear, to canonise her for the martyrdom she suffered for the sake of her God and His holy laws.

There is no doubt that had the great and noble-hearted Duc de Guise been living, vengeance would

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assuredly have been taken for the death of so fair a queen. Enough has now been said on so mournful a subject; I will add nothing further.

An interesting Latin epitaph still exists, of which the substance is as follows:—‘Nature made this Queen to shine forth in the eyes of all the world; for her beauty and her virtues she has been regarded with great admiration during her lifetime: but England was jealous of her, and brought her to the block, that she might be scoffed and jeered at; but in that was England grievously mistaken, for the sight of her upon the scaffold provoked the admiration of all, and called down the glory and mercy of God upon her luckless head.’

I must, before I end, say one thing more in reply to those whom I have heard speak ill of the Queen on account of Chastelard, whom she put to death in Scotland, in order to refute the arguments of those who are so ill-natured as to maintain that she only suffered in return for what she herself had made others suffer. There is no justice whatever in this; those who know the true history of the affair do not blame the Queen in any way; to justify her action, I will relate the story of the execution.

Chastelard was a nobleman of Dauphiné, of good and ancient lineage, the great-nephew, on his mother's side, of the brave M. de Bayard; they say he resembled him in figure, for he was of medium height and exceeding fine proportions, rather inclined to thinness, as M. de Bayard was said to be. He was very skilful in the use of arms, and addicted to manly sports of all kinds.

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He was, in short, a gentleman of many parts; not wanting, either, in intellect, for he was a fine talker and as fluent a writer, both in prose and verse, as any nobleman in France.

He succeeded M. d'Amville, as he was styled in those days, he who to-day is High Constable of France: and when, in company with M. le Grand Prieur, of the house of Lorraine, and M. d'Amville, we were accompanying the Queen to Scotland, this said Chastelard was one of the party, and while in this company he made himself a special favourite with the Queen, principally in respect of his skill in verse-making. He wrote one poem on the Queen which was a translation from the Italian, a language with which he was thoroughly well acquainted, which begins: '*Che giova posseder città e regni?*' etc., a very beautiful sonnet, the substance of which is as follows:—'Of what avail is it to possess kingdoms, cities, towns, provinces, to hold sway over many nations, be respected, feared, admired of all and yet remain a widow and live in icy solitude, alone?'

He wrote several other equally fine poems; I have myself seen many in his handwriting; none of them, I think, were ever published.

The Queen, who had a fondness for letters in general and verses in particular (she could write very pretty ones herself), was always pleased to see those of Chastelard, and would sometimes compose replies to any that especially took her fancy. In a short time the young man became enamoured of his Queen (for how is it in our power to love or not to

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love?) and his ambitious passion led him up to heights too giddy for ordinary mortals. In bygone times men loved goddesses, and even the most chaste of matrons, and still do; nay, men have lost their hearts to marble statues before now. The ladies themselves are in no way to blame for this. Let him who will burn with a secret flame and be consumed inwardly!

Chastelard received his *congé*, and returned in high dudgeon and despair to France. After a year had elapsed, the first civil war broke out in France. He, being of the Religion, knew not what side to embrace, and wavered between going to Orleans with the others and staying with M. d'Amville and making war with him upon those who were of his own belief. The latter course went too much against his conscience, whilst the former troubled him not a little, for he was loth to take up arms against his master. He finally decided to do neither, but, remaining neutral, exiled himself from France and betook himself again to Scotland, leaving his countrymen to fight it out alone. He informed M. d'Amville of his decision and begged him to write to the Queen concerning him. I myself witnessed his departure, for we were good friends, and he came to me and bade me farewell, telling me something of his plans.

He accomplished the journey successfully, and as soon as he reached Scotland he went straight to the Queen and laid his case before her, so advantageously to himself that she received him very kindly and welcomed him back to her side. But

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he abused her gracious friendliness and again endeavoured to approach too near the great and glowing sun whose warmth he coveted, and again he came to grief. Under the influence of the burning passion that consumed him, he so far forgot himself as to hide beneath the Queen's bed, where he was discovered when the Queen retired to rest. She, however, without making any scandal, pardoned him freely, following the example of the lady-in-waiting in the '*Nouvelles de la Reyne de Navarre*,' who gave her mistress such excellent advice when one of the nobles of her brother's court suddenly appeared at her bedside through a trap-door specially constructed by him and endeavoured to do violence to the poor Queen. All he got for his pains was some very fine scratches, and when the Queen of Navarre wished to punish him for his presumption, and complain of him to her brother, her lady-in-waiting advised her not to take any further steps, saying that his scratches were punishment enough, and that, in endeavouring to show how bright and untarnished was her honour, she might only obscure it, for honour, in the case of such a lady as she was, should never be brought into question; the more it was discussed the more likely was it to become smirched and foul.

Ever wise and prudent as she was, the Queen of Scotland followed the same course, and so avoided a scandal; but Chastelard, whom naught but one thing could satisfy, half-mad for love of his mistress, made a second attempt to conceal himself in her

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bedroom, and this time the Queen had no choice but to vindicate her honour in the eyes of her ladies and even of her people, who must inevitably have come to know of the affair, by handing him over to justice. In due course was he condemned to be executed. On the day of his death, when he was brought to the scaffold, he held in his hands a copy of M. de Ronsard's poems, and, for consolation, set himself to read through his 'Hymn to Death' from beginning to end; from no holy book did he read, nor were priest or confessor asked to absolve him for his sins.

After he had finished reading, he turned to where he thought the Queen might be and cried out: 'Farewell, most beautiful and most cruel princess in all the world!' and then, stretching out his neck, he gave himself up to the executioner's axe without a tremor.

Some have blamed her for punishing with such severity one for whom she might have had compassion. But what could she have done? Had she, after once pardoning him for a grave offence, consented to do so a second time, she would have scandalised the whole of her world; if her honour was to be saved, it was essential that strong action should be taken: one cannot say more than that.

CHAPTER IV

ELIZABETH OF FRANCE, QUEEN OF SPAIN

I WILL now give some account of the Queen of Spain, Elizabeth of France, and a true daughter of France, a beautiful, wise, virtuous, witty and kind lady. Since the days of Saint Elizabeth herself, no one who has borne that name has ever surpassed Elizabeth of France in virtue and grace, even though, as some have thought, the name Elizabeth has always been synonymous with kindness, virtue, and holiness.

Great was the joy of the King, her grandfather, her father, and her mother when she was born, at Fontainebleau; men said she was a star of good omen to her country, bringing with her all manner of happiness; at her christening, peace came to the land of France, as it did again, later, at the time of her marriage. When peace was made with King Henry of England, the King of France asked him to act as godfather to his little granddaughter, so that there might be no doubt as to the genuineness of the intentions of his brother of England, and he gave to her the beautiful name of Elizabeth. At her birth and baptism there was as much rejoicing in the land as when the little King François was brought into the world.

When still an infant she gave promise of great

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achievement in the days to come ; when she arrived at years of discretion she gave even greater promise : for every virtue and every grace seemed to flourish within her, so that she became an object of admiration to all the Court, who prophesied that she would one day attain greatness and become a mighty ruler in Europe. It is said that when King Henri married his second daughter, Claude, to the Duke of Lorraine there were some who ventured to remonstrate with him for marrying a younger daughter before an elder ; but he made answer to this effect : ‘ My daughter Elizabeth is such that she needs no duke to marry her. Not a duchy, but a kingdom shall be hers, and no small kingdom either, but one of the great ones, even as she herself is great. She is sure to find such a kingdom, and therefore can afford to wait quietly until her king comes to claim her.’ He spoke as a prophet. When the time came he had no hesitation in procuring a kingdom for his daughter, for, when peace was made between him and the King of Spain, he promised Elizabeth in marriage to Don Carlos, a brave and gallant prince, the image of his grandfather, the Emperor Charles, who, had he lived, would have made a wise and great king. But the King of Spain, his father, being now a widower, for that his wife, the Queen of England, who was also his first cousin, had but lately died, when he saw a portrait of Madame Elizabeth, finding it very beautiful and very much to his liking, cut the grass under his son’s feet, so to speak, and took the lady unto himself. Frenchmen and Spaniards were all

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agreed on the suitability of the match ; it seemed as though the fair young bride had been made perfect even at the time of her conception, and that God Almighty had kept her in His thoughts until such time as He saw fit to wed her to the great King, her husband. For it was foreordained that so mighty, so powerful, and so noble a king could marry none but the highest and noblest in the land, a princess of heavenly beauty and divine virtue, perfect in every respect ; and such an one did he find in his bride, Elizabeth. When the Duke of Alba came over to marry her on behalf of the King his master he found her extremely charming, and entirely suitable for her lord, and said that she would indeed make the King of Spain forget his vain regrets for the wives he had lost—he had been married twice, his first wife having been a princess of the house of Portugal.

I have it on good authority that when the said Prince Carlos saw her he fell so violently in love with her that he was madly jealous of his father for the rest of his life : indeed he felt so aggrieved at having been deprived of what should really have been his that he never afterwards felt the same affection for his father, and persisted in saying that great wrong had been done to him in taking from him that which had been solemnly promised as a pledge of peace. They say that his early death was due in part to the bitterness of his disappointment ; there were other reasons, too, into which it is not necessary for me to enter. One thing, at least, is certain, that he could not help loving his lost bride, Eliza-

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beth, with all his heart and soul, so lovely did she appear in his eyes, as, indeed, she did in the eyes of all.

Her hair and eyes were jet-black, casting a shadow over her fair face that rendered it so attractive that in Spain (so I have heard) men dreaded to look at her, for fear that they might entirely lose their hearts, and, by exciting the jealousy of the King, her husband, put their lives in jeopardy.

Churchmen, too, kept their eyes from her face for fear of temptation, for they knew of no power strong enough to overcome the weakness of the flesh did they but behold her. Even after she had had the small-pox (of which she fell ill after she had been married some little while), she was still as beautiful as ever, for her face was so carefully treated with poultices made from fresh eggs that it was not, in the end, marked at all. When she was stricken with this disease, the Queen, her mother, was so anxious about her that she sent courier after courier to her bedside, each bearing a different remedy, but none proved so efficacious as that of the egg-poultices, which, to my mind, is the sovereign remedy.

Her figure was admirable, and in height she was the tallest of all her sisters, a fact that rendered her more noticeable than ever in Spain, where a tall woman is rarely to be seen, and for that reason highly esteemed. She had moreover a very graceful carriage, bearing herself ever with a majesty and a dignity that combined all the excellences of

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both French and Spanish deportment. I have myself seen her going forth from her Court, whether to church, or to visit some monastery, or to her gardens, followed by so great a crowd of admiring spectators that it was impossible to turn in the throng; happy did that man deem himself who could say in the evening of any day of his life: 'I have seen the Queen.' It is said, too, and this I know to be true, that never was queen so loved in Spain before. I say this with all due deference to Queen Isabella of Castille. They called her '*La reyna de la paz y de la bondad*'—that is to say, 'The queen of peace and of virtue.' We in France called her the olive branch of peace.

A year before she came to France, to Bayonne, she fell ill of so dire a disease that her life was despaired of. There came to the Court an Italian doctor who was but little known, and he, presenting himself to the King, announced that he could cure the Queen, if it should please him to grant permission. The King readily gave him permission to try, for he felt that otherwise his wife would die. The doctor went to her and gave her some medicine that in a most miraculous way brought the colour once more into her cheeks; she opened her mouth and began to speak to those who stood watching her. From that moment her health improved, and not long after she was well on the way towards complete recovery. Meanwhile the entire Court and all the people of Spain crowded the roads, directing their steps ever towards the churches, where they might pray for her health, some only in their shirts, others

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with bare feet and bare heads, bringing offerings of all kinds and sending up prayers and intercessions to God, fasting and otherwise mortifying their bodies, in the hope that her health might be restored to her; so much so that some thought that all these prayers, tears, vows, and cries offered up to God were the cause of her recovery, and not the skill of the physician at all.

I arrived in Spain a month after her recovery, and the people were still offering thanks to God and rejoicing in all manner of ways at her blessed deliverance—nothing like it had ever been seen before. I saw her come out from the palace and get into her coach and seat herself by the window, as she always did: such beauty as hers was certainly should not have been hidden; it may be that she felt this herself.

She was clad in a dress of white satin, richly embroidered in silver, and she wore no veil. I think I never saw anyone half so beautiful as the Queen, as I was myself bold enough to tell her. She welcomed me very kindly to her side, coming as I did from the Court of France, bringing news of her brother the King and the Queen her mother; all her pleasure was in hearing of them. Nor was it I alone who found her beautiful, but all the Spanish Court and all the people of Madrid were of my opinion too; men said her illness had only enhanced her loveliness, improving her colouring and rendering her complexion so delicate and clear that she seemed more beautiful than she had ever been before.

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The first time she left her room after her illness she went straight to church to thank God for her merciful deliverance from death, feeling that was one of her first duties; and she repeated her visit every day for fifteen days, besides making a very holy vow to Our Lady of Guadalupe. On every occasion she went unveiled among her people, and so fascinated them with her beauty that one would have said they idolised, rather than honoured and revered, their fair young Queen.

And when she came to die (I have heard so from the late M. de Lignerolles, who saw her die, for he had come to bring the news of the victory of the battle of Jarnac to the King of Spain) never was seen a people so much overcome with sorrow; so great was their grief, indeed, that neither the men nor the women could turn to any of their wonted occupations, but gave themselves up wholly to despair and bitter grief.

She died as she had lived, nobly and bravely, looking forward eagerly to her life in the world to come as she felt her hold on this world loosening.

There are sinister rumours as to the manner of her death, which some say was premature. I have been told by one of her ladies that the first time she saw her husband she stared at him so fixedly that the King chafed under her gaze and said to her: '*Que mirais? Si tengo canas?*'—that is to say: 'What are you looking at? Are you searching for white hairs?' And these words went straight to her heart, and affected her so greatly that from

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that moment men augured ill for her peace and happiness.

It is said that one day a certain famous Jesuit, speaking of her in his sermon, and praising her rare gifts, let fall the remark that it was an ill deed to bring death upon her when she was still so young and innocent; he was immediately banished to one of Spain's most distant possessions in the Indies, but from what I have heard he had only spoken the truth.

Never, during the whole of her life in Spain, did the affection she bore for France grow less; nor did she behave as did Germaine de Foix, second wife of King Ferdinand, who became so proud on her elevation to high rank that she no longer gave a thought to her native country. So disdainful was she in her manner towards it that when her uncle, King Louis XII., and Ferdinand arranged a meeting at Savonne, she maintained an arrogant demeanour during the whole interview and never once let her glance fall upon the French, nor even acknowledged the presence of her own brother, the Duc de Nemours. She was laughed at for her pains at the time, and, later, upon the death of her husband, she learned to rue the day when she had held her head so high, for she fell from her great estate and became miserably poor and was considered of no account. God Almighty did unto her as she in her pride had done unto others.

Queen Elizabeth was never once guilty of such conduct. She was born great, and had a great

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mind, and nothing, not even the lustre of a crown or the glory of a kingdom, could turn her from the paths of lowliness and humility. Had she been so minded, she would have been justified in being haughty and arrogant, for, unlike Germaine de Foix, she was a daughter of a great king of France, and accustomed to consort with the greatest king in the world, for her husband was king not of a single kingdom, but of several—of Spain, Jerusalem, Sicily, Majorca, Minorca, Sardinia, and the West Indies (a whole world in itself), and lord of countless other territories—which Ferdinand was not. For this reason the fair meed of praise is especially due to our princess for her sweet and gentle disposition, and for the affection she showed to any French who came to visit her in Spain; they were welcomed so kindly by the Queen that none, from the highest to the lowest, ever left her company without feeling that high honour had been done to them. I can speak from personal experience of this, and never shall I forget the way in which she honoured me with her gracious interest, or how, on the many occasions when I was in Spain, she sent for me to inquire what news I had brought her of the King, and the Queen, her mother, of her brothers and sisters and all the members of the Court of France, never forgetting one, but enumerating all her old friends and inquiring anxiously after their welfare. I used to wonder how she could remember them all; it was as though she had but lately left her native

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land. I told her that I was filled with wonder that, amid all the splendour of her life in Spain, she was able to recall the past so vividly.

When she came to Bayonne, the same thing was noticeable: she remembered the ladies of the Court as clearly as though she were herself still a maiden among them. Of those who had married and left the Court, or of those who were new-comers, she was especially interested to hear.

And it was just the same with the gentlemen of her acquaintance. She was often heard to remark: 'So-and-so was of my time; I remember him well. But this one was not: I desire to make his acquaintance.' In short she pleased the whole world she moved in.

When she made her grand entry into Bayonne she rode upon a palfrey that was magnificently accoutred and draped with a garniture of pearls which had belonged to a former empress and was said to be worth more than a hundred thousand crowns—some say much more. She had a very graceful seat on horseback, and looked so lovely as she rode along at the head of the procession that all who beheld her were enchanted at the fair vision.

We were all under orders to go out to meet her and join her as she entered the town, as indeed we were in duty bound to do. Gladly did we carry out her behests, and she, as we made our obeisances to her, thanked us graciously for our welcome. To me was she specially kind, for I had left Spain but four months before. I was greatly touched by

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her courtesy, for I seemed to be favoured more than my companions. As I had lately returned from Portugal, she requested the Duke of Alba to present me to the King of Spain, who received me graciously and begged me to give him all news of the battle.

She also presented me to Don Carlos, as soon as she saw him enter her room in company with his princess, and also to Don Juan. On account of a toothache I had contracted on board ship it was two days before I again went to see her. She in the meantime had, so I heard, inquired after me of one of her maidens, wondering whether I were ill. When she heard of my indisposition she sent her physician to visit me, who brought me a most effective drug; on holding it in the hollow of my hand the pain in my tooth suddenly disappeared.

I am proud to be able to say that I was the first to bear to the Queen, her mother, the news that Queen Elizabeth was longing to come to France to see her, and right gladly did she receive the news. Elizabeth was ever a good daughter to her mother, and there was great affection between them. The daughter was in such awe of her mother that she never received a letter from her, so I have heard it said, but she dreaded to open it, fearing lest it might contain some angry word or reproach. As a fact, her mother never once spoke angrily to her after her marriage; notwithstanding this, Queen Elizabeth never ceased to apprehend the arrival of her letters.

It was shortly before this journey to Bayonne

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that the elder Pompadour had killed Chambret, at Bordeaux, in rather an ugly fashion, so it is said. The Queen-Mother was so enraged when she heard of it that, if she could have caught him, she would certainly have had Pompadour beheaded upon the spot; in consideration of her feelings none would have dared to beg for mercy on his behalf.

M. de Strozzi was the Pompadour's great friend, and conceived the notion of sending his own sister, la Segnora Clerice Strozzi, Comtesse de Tende, to plead for him with the Queen of Spain, who had known her from infancy and had loved her all her life. The countess was very fond of her brother and agreed to do as he wished, and intercede with the Queen of Spain. The latter told her she would do a great deal for her, but not that, for she feared her mother too much to risk her displeasure. The matter, however, was taken up by a third party, who told the Queen-Mother quietly that her daughter wished to make this request of her, out of consideration for the countess, whom she loved, but that she feared to put it to her, dreading her displeasure. The Queen-Mother made answer that for her to refuse her daughter anything would indeed be quite foreign to her nature. The Queen of Spain, on being told of this, presented her little petition, but still in fear and trembling. It was granted her immediately. How noble-minded was this princess, great as she was herself, so to honour, so to revere the Queen, her mother. Alas! for the sacred commandment that says: 'Honour thy father and mother, that thy days may be long in

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the land'—though she never ceased to honour her parents, yet was she laid low in the glorious springtime of her life, and died at the age of twenty-three. At this hour at which I write she would only have been forty-six. To think that so bright a sun should be obscured in the dark tomb, when it might have illuminated the world with its beams for twenty years and more, before it should be dimmed by age—for her beauty was not of the sort that would fade early, nor was she likely to have been affected prematurely by the ravages of time.

If her death came as a bitter blow to the Spaniards, how much more bitter was it to us French! For while she lived there was never a misunderstanding between the two countries: there were unfortunately only too many after she had gone; she had known how to manage the King, her husband, and to persuade him to look favourably upon us. Never had we cause to complain of the love she bore us, a love that seemed to resemble that of a mother for her children.

She left two daughters behind her, as good and fair as any in Christendom. When they had reached the ages of three and four years respectively, she begged the King, her husband, to leave the eldest entirely to her care, so that she might bring her up as a little French child. The King agreed willingly to her request, and the mother took special charge of the child, and gave her so thorough an education, after the manner of a French parent, that she is to-day as true a Frenchwoman as her sister is

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Spanish, with as whole-hearted a devotion to the French as her mother could have wished. We may rest assured that all the power she derives from the great King her father she will use for the benefit of the French, knowing as she does of their difficulties with the Spanish.

I have heard how that, one day when the young princess was at Lisbon, after the defeat of M. de Strozzi, many French soldiers and officers were put to the galleys, she went and visited them, and proceeded to set free all the French whom she saw in chains. She set free up to the number of a hundred and twenty, at the same time giving them money to return to their native land. What is more, she went about her self-appointed task with so determined an air that the captains of the galleys were obliged to hide what prisoners remained to them.

She was a very beautiful princess, gentle and kind to all, and she had besides a thorough knowledge of the affairs of her father's kingdom. I hope to speak of her again elsewhere, for she deserves respect for the love she bore to France, and if we owe allegiance to this princess for loving us, how much more do we owe to the Queen, her mother, who brought her up in such a way that she could not but love us.

To return to Queen Elizabeth: when she was handed over to the Duke of Infantado and the Cardinal of Burgos, who had been commissioned by their King to welcome her at Roncevaux, after the deputies had made their bow to her, she

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rose from her chair to receive the duke and the cardinal, and to listen to the address delivered by the latter. She replied in such lofty and gracious language that all who heard her were astonished. The King of Navarre, who had been made responsible for her safe conduct, and was at the head of the army that had accompanied her, was then invited to give her over formally to the care of the Spanish King's representatives. In the course of his reply he said: 'I herewith hand over to you this princess, who has been taken from the house of the greatest king in the world to be given into the care of the most illustrious king on earth. Judging as I do, no doubt rightly, that you have been chosen by the King your master as in every way worthy to receive her, I have no hesitation in leaving her in your charge; I pray you, in all earnestness, take all care of her person, for she is a noble lady who merits every kindness; and I would have you to know that never before has there entered Spain so lovely an example of all the Christian virtues, as you will see for yourselves in due course of time.'

The Spaniards immediately made answer that, as to her dignity and nobility of character, they had already judged of that on her arrival; rare indeed were the virtues she displayed.

She had, moreover, considerable learning, for the Queen, her mother, had given her an excellent training at the hands of M. de Saint-Estienne, a master whom she never ceased to love and respect until the day of her death. She was very fond of

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poetry and greatly enjoyed reading it aloud. She could speak both French and Spanish fluently; the latter she learnt, almost to perfection, in the first three or four months of her sojourn in Spain.

To Frenchmen she invariably spoke French, and was constantly in the habit of reading it in the best books, which she received direct from France. To the Spaniards and other foreigners she spoke Spanish, very fluently, as I have already remarked. In short, the princess came little short of perfection in every imaginable respect.

She never wore the same dress twice, but, after once wearing it, gave it away to one of her women; and the dresses that she wore were all so handsome that the simplest of them could not have cost less than three or four hundred crowns. The King, her husband, lavished everything upon her, and saw that her every wish was gratified. A new dress was made for her every day, as I learned from her tailor, who, from being a poor man, became as rich as any in the land, as I saw for myself.

The result was that she was always handsomely dressed, and she took care to see that her clothes became her well; she had a fancy for slashed sleeves, set off on the shoulders with what the Spaniards call *puntas*; her manner of dressing her hair, too, left nothing to be desired. Those who only knew her from her pictures admired her greatly; I leave you to judge of the pleasure her lovely appearance gave to those who were privileged to behold her face to face.

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In pearls and precious stones she was not lacking, for the King, her husband, had amassed a magnificent collection—for her in particular, and for his family in general. Alas! poor lady, what did all her wealth profit her in the end!

To her women she was invariably kind and considerate. Those of them who were so thoroughly French as not to be able to bear the thought of spending the rest of their lives in a foreign land she allowed to return to France, after having begged from the King, her husband, on their behalf, a gift of four thousand crowns each as a dowry. But those who elected to stay with their mistress fared better still, as in the case of Mesdemoiselles de Saint-Ana and Saint-Legier, who had the honour of acting as governesses to the children of the Queen, and were eventually married to two very noble lords of Spain. Such were the wisest among her women, for it is better to be great in a strange land than small in one's own; nor must it be forgotten that 'A prophet is not without honour save in his own country.'

This is all I mean to say in this place concerning this great Queen; but I shall probably speak of her again.

In this discourse and in those that precede it, I am well aware that I might be charged with having included many small and superfluous details. I daresay I shall, but, while they may displease some, it is just such details that please others. It seems to me that, when one wants to praise a noble lady, it is hardly enough to say that she was beautiful, wise, virtuous, brave, valiant, magnanimous, liberal-

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mined, generous, and altogether perfect. Besides merely enunciating all the various good qualities, one ought, so it seems to me, to specify particular excellences and describe them more carefully, in order, as it were, fully to impress them upon the mind of the reader. Such being my opinion, it has always been my pleasure to store up in my memory all details that would be likely to illuminate the character of any lady of whom I, at some time or another, intend to write.

CHAPTER V

MARGUERITE, QUEEN OF FRANCE AND OF NAVARRE

WHEN I think of all the miseries and misfortunes of this fair Queen, of whom I have already spoken, and indeed of all the misfortunes of many other brave women whom I refrain from enumerating, for fear of spoiling my present narrative by too much digression; when, I say, I think of all that befell them, I fain must come to the conclusion that Fortune, the goddess in whose hands lie every happiness and every unhappiness that visit us poor mortals, is the sworn enemy of beauty, in whatever shape or form; for, if ever woman was perfect in her loveliness, it was the Queen of Navarre, and yet how ill did Fortune serve her! It was as though she, the goddess, were jealous of Nature for having made the princess so very fair, and, out of spite, made her the especial object of her malignant spleen.

However that may be, the fact remains that Queen Marguerite's beauty was such that no assaults of an evil fate could impair it, while ill-luck only served to call up in her all the generous emotions and noble courage that she had inherited from generations of royal ancestors. Gallantly indeed did she resist the onslaughts of her enemy.

To describe the beauty of this fair princess, it

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were best to say that all who came into her presence seemed plain by contrast, or, again, if there were any of so little faith as to doubt the miracles performed by Nature and by God they had but to behold this lovely visage, and straightway they believed. It has been said of the Queen of Navarre that Mother Nature, ever a skilful worker, had in this case used all her subtlest arts in the fashioning of the Queen's face. So lovely were her features, so well drawn her lineaments, her eyes so bright and clear, that but to speak of them set the heart of all the world aglow—more I cannot say. To the lovely face was added a form no less lovely. In short, this lady, with her divine face and superb figure, might far more easily have been taken for a goddess than an earthly princess; many are of opinion that never goddess was so fair as she. Properly to proclaim her beauties and her virtues, one would have to pray that God Almighty might increase the earth and raise the vault of heaven, for now the earth and the air above the earth are all too narrow and confined for the report of such perfection and such fair renown.

I would put before you an example or two, to show the extent to which the beauty of this Queen was admired. Well do I remember the day on which the Polish ambassador came to France to announce his election to the throne of Poland to our King and to render him homage. After they had made their obeisances to King Charles and the Queen-Mother, and to their newly ap-

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pointed King, they were very careful, on different days, to present themselves also to Monsieur and to the King and Queen of Navarre. But on the day upon which they came before Queen Marguerite she appeared to them so very lovely, and so magnificently and superbly attired, that they stood before her in amazement, losing the use even of their tongues. Among them there was one le Lasqui, one of the principal ambassadors, who was heard to mutter to himself as he withdrew: 'After such beauty I should be content never to see anything more. I would willingly do as the Turks do, when they go on a pilgrimage to the tomb of their prophet Mahomet, and are so deeply affected by its splendour and magnificence that they have no wish to look on anything else in their lifetime, and forthwith proceed to burn out their eyes and destroy their sight, saying that inasmuch as they are never likely to see anything so beautiful again they may as well see nothing.'

In such a manner did the Pole speak of the wonderful beauty of our princess. And there is no doubt that it was not the Poles alone who were carried away by her beauty. I could mention, among many others, Don Juan of Austria, who, having arrived at Paris one day, when on a journey through France, and hearing that a grand ball was being held in the Louvre that evening, attended it, disguised, solely for the purpose of seeing the Queen of Navarre. He had a splendid opportunity of seeing her, for on such occasions she was generally led out by the King, her brother. Long did his

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gaze rest upon her, and greatly was he impressed with what he saw; he placed her far above the beauties of Spain and Italy (two countries that are renowned for the beauty of their women), saying in Spanish that, however true it might be that the Queen's beauty was more of the divine than the human order, she was far more likely to ruin men and send them to everlasting torment than to save them.

Shortly after this he saw her again, on her way to the baths at Liege. They met at Namur, greatly to the delight of Don Juan, who wished for nothing so much as a sight of her lovely face. He went out to meet her in sumptuous array, in true Spanish fashion, and received her with as much pomp and ceremony as if she had been his sister, Queen Elizabeth, herself. On this occasion it was not the beauty of her person only that enchanted him, but also that of her mind, of which I hope to say more anon. But it was not only Don Juan who lavished praises upon her, but all the brave Spanish officers who had the good fortune to behold her, men who maintained that the conquest of so great a beauty was worth far more than the conquest of a kingdom, and happy were the soldiers who died beneath the banner of such a mistress.

Nor is it to be wondered at that such men as these, of gentle birth and bred in the courts of love, should find this princess beautiful, when I have even seen Turks, whilst on an embassy to her brothers, our kings of France, lost in admiration at her loveliness, and have heard them exclaim

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that not even the sight of their great lord himself, marching in all his glory at the head of his army, was to be compared with that of this fair young Queen.

I have known foreigners, by the score, who have come to the Court of France solely for the purpose of seeing this Queen, for her fame had spread throughout Europe.

A gallant Neapolitan knight came to Paris once when Queen Marguerite was away on a visit to the baths, and prolonged his visit two months in order that he might see her. And having done so, he said: 'Once upon a time the Princess of Salerno had so great a reputation for beauty in our town of Naples that a stranger who came and went without seeing her was told, on his return to his native country, that in that case he had not seen Naples. So it is with me; had I returned without seeing the Princess, and been asked whether I had seen France, I should have answered no, since I had not seen the Queen, whom I deem the chief ornament of France, but since I have in this hour beheld her I can say that I have seen all the beauty of the world, and that our Princess of Salerno was not in any way to be compared with her. I can depart well content at having seen such loveliness, and I leave you Frenchmen to imagine how lucky I think you are to be able to look upon such a face whenever you wish, and draw near to so divine a fire, which even from afar can warm cold hearts and set them all aglow more easily than our own fine ladies are able to do close at hand.' These are the actual

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words which the gentle knight one day used to me.

M. de Ronsard had good reason for composing the graceful elegy which is to be found among his works in honour of the fair Princess Marguerite of France, who, by the way, was not at that time married. In it he introduces us to Venus, and makes her ask her son, after he had visited the earth and walked among the ladies of the Court of France, whether he had found any whose beauty outrivalled her own. 'Yea, mother,' he replies; 'I have seen one, in whom, even from her infancy, all the glories of heaven seem to have been gathered.' At this a blush rose to the cheek of Venus; she refused to believe the tale, and despatched one of her Loves to the earth with orders to look carefully at the subject of such praises and report upon her. Whereupon there follows in the elegy a fine description of the faultless charms of this princess, given to Venus by Pasithea, the messenger sent down to earth. No one in the world could fail to derive pleasure from its perusal; but M. de Ronsard, as a clever woman pointed out to me one day, seems here rather to fall short of his reputation as eulogist; for he might, instead of ending with a mere recital of charms, have made Pasithea, ascending again to heaven, recount to Venus her impression of the beauty, adding that her son, far from overstating his case, had not said enough in the lady's favour, thereby filling her mistress with jealousy and spite. The poet might have gone on to describe how Venus, in her rage, went forthwith

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to Jupiter to charge him with having fashioned a beauty for the earth which put all those of heaven to shame, and to say that, to spite him, she would henceforward robe herself in black, and deprive him of the pleasure and allurements of her society for a time; for there is nothing so vexing to a perfect beauty as to be told that her equal, let alone her superior, exists.

Moreover, it is worth noting that in addition to her being by nature lovely, and in herself fairer than the day, our Queen also knew very well how to dress herself, and was always so characteristically and so handsomely attired, from head to foot, that in every respect could she be said to have attained absolute perfection.

To Isabel of Bavaria, wife of King Charles VI., the honour is attributed of having been the first to introduce into France a really superb style of dress for her ladies; but, to judge from the ancient tapestries of her day, in which are portrayed ladies dressed after the fashion of that day, it must be confessed that strange sights went for beauties under the régime of Isabel of Bavaria, when we compare them with the charming devices and adornments of our Queen Marguerite, which were eagerly adopted by the great ladies of her Court. I can remember well (for I was present at the time) the occasion on which the Queen, the King's mother, conducted the Queen, her daughter, to the King of Navarre, her husband, and how that, on her finding herself obliged to pass through Cognac, she elected to make a short stay there. Several of the great

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ladies of the district came to make their bow to her, and were all, without exception, enchanted with the beauty of the Queen of Navarre, and seemed never to weary of expressing their admiration to the Queen, her mother, who was herself delighted with their praise. Wherefore did she one day bid her daughter dress herself in her richest possible attire, and Queen Marguerite, willingly obliging the commands of so good a mother, arrayed herself in a dress such as she was in the habit of wearing at Court only upon very grand occasions, solely to give pleasure to these good ladies who admired her so greatly. She appeared in a polonaise robe of dove-coloured and silver cloth, with hanging sleeves; her hair was very handsomely dressed, and over her coiffure was draped a beautiful white veil. As she stood before the company in all her grace and charm she looked far more like a goddess sent down from heaven than a queen upon the earth. The ladies, who before had been lost in admiration at her loveliness, were now a thousand times more deeply affected. The Queen said to her: 'Daughter, your appearance does you credit'; and Queen Marguerite replied: 'Madame, I may as well wear out my dresses and have done with the fashions I have brought with me from Court; for, when I return, I shall not wear any of them again; I shall take back with me only scissors and material, in order that I may dress myself anew, according to whatever fashion I find in vogue.' But the Queen answered: 'Why do you speak thus, my daughter? For it is you yourself who have the

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power to invent and set the fashion, by the clothes you wear; wherever you chance to travel, the Court must always follow your lead in the matter of dress, not you theirs.'

Her mother was right: when she returned to the Court she had no difficulty in adapting her wardrobe to the prevailing fashion, and in gently leading her ladies to adopt her own ideas of what was beautiful in dress.

It were difficult to decide, in regard to this fair Queen, what style of head-dress best became her, whether the French style, with its charming hood, or the style with the simpler form of head-dress, or that of the great veil, or the bonnet—she could array herself to advantage in all these styles, and seldom failed to add to them some little device of her own, which was invariably original, not to say inimitable. If her ladies endeavoured, as they generally did, to follow their mistress as a model, they never succeeded in attaining to anything like her elegance and individuality in dress; I used to notice this again and again. Occasionally I saw her in a robe of white satin, richly ornamented with some beautiful glittering trimming, with just a touch of crimson introduced; she used to wear, with this costume, a veil of tan-coloured crêpe gauze, carelessly thrown over her head, and the whole effect was strikingly beautiful. Whatever has been said of the goddesses and the empresses of olden times, to judge from what we see of them on ancient medals they would have appeared mere common chambermaids beside our lovely Queen Marguerite of Navarre.

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I have often heard our courtiers arguing among themselves as to which of her costumes most became her, which set her beauty off to best advantage; on these occasions each of the disputants would describe his choice and they would then proceed to discuss its claims to the first place among her robes. For my part, I think her most becoming gown (and others agree with me) was the one she wore on the day on which the Queen-Mother held a grand reception at the Tuileries in honour of the visit of the Poles. On that occasion she was clad in a robe of crimson velvet, glittering with tinsel, with a bonnet of the same material, decked out with a wonderful array of plumes and precious stones. So lovely was her appearance that many of her friends could not refrain from complimenting her upon it, and thereafter she often wore the crimson velvet, and had her portrait painted in it, too.

When she first showed herself at the Tuileries, on that eventful day, I said to M. de Ronsard, who stood near me: 'Tell me truly, sir, doth it not seem to you that this fair Queen appears as lovely as the Dawn when her pale face is tinged with a blush of crimson? Surely there is a striking resemblance between the two?' M. de Ronsard did me the honour to agree with me; he used the simile in a very fine sonnet, which he was so kind as to present to me: I would he had given me more, and that I had room to insert them all.

I also saw the Queen at Blois, on the day on which the King, her brother, made his famous speech.

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She wore a dress of black and orange, of which the foundation was of some bright black material, and a rich veil. Seated thus beside her brother, she appeared so enchantingly beautiful that there was hardly anyone present at the assembly but seemed to gaze at her rather than attend to the weighty words of the King, her brother, in spite of the excellence of his speech. I have also seen her occasionally with her hair dressed naturally, unadorned with any powder or wig. She had black hair (inherited from her father, King Henri), and was so clever at curling it, and plaiting it, arranging it in imitation of her sister, the Queen of Spain, who never wore any but her own hair, that the natural head-dress became her perhaps better than any other that she wore. Clearly a case of beauty unadorned excelling all artifice in its effect. Yet on the whole she preferred to don a wig, and more often than not dressed her swarthy locks with powder and pomade; certainly the wigs she wore were very elegant creations.

I fear I should never have done if I were to begin describing all the costumes in which she looked beautiful; all were different from one another, and all became her so well that it seemed almost as if nature and art were vying with one another in rendering her more fair than mortal woman had ever been before. Nor is this all that could be said; for no matter what gown she wore she never dared cover her fair neck and bosom; the gown itself would have hesitated ere it cheated the world of a sight so delightful! Never before

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was there seen a neck and bosom so lovely and so white, so firm and so full: she did not ever, as I have said, hesitate to uncover, and when she did so, woe betide the courtiers whose eyes beheld the sight, nay, even her ladies (this I have seen for myself) would be so carried away at the sight that, with her permission, they would fall upon her neck and put their lips to her breast.

I well remember a noble, newly arrived at Court, saying to me one day, on the occasion of his first sight of the Queen of Navarre: 'I can easily understand why you gentlemen are so fond of the Court: for, had you no other pleasure than that of looking day by day on so lovely a princess, you would still be living in an earthly paradise.'

In the days of old the Roman emperors, to give pleasure to their people, instituted games and gladiatorial shows in their theatres; to give delight to the people of France, and win their goodwill, one had only to give them an occasional glimpse—the more frequent the better—of Queen Marguerite, and let them feast their eyes on the lovely face, which, unlike all the other ladies of the Court, she took care never to cover with a mask.

One day at Blois, Palm Sunday, in fact, when she was still only Madame, the King's sister (although her marriage had already been arranged by then), I saw her in the procession, looking more beautiful than anyone on earth. The beauty of her face and the comeliness of her figure were enhanced by a very handsome dress. Her fair

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young face, which resembled the vault of heaven in its calm serenity and loveliness, was set off by a beautiful head-dress of pearls and brilliant diamonds. She wore a dress of cloth-of-gold, the material of which had been given by the Grand Turk to M. de Grand-Champ on his departure from Constantinople. It was a piece of fifteen ells in length, and Grand-Champ told me that it had cost a hundred crowns an ell, and was a most wonderful stuff. When he came to France, not knowing anyone who was likely to make better use of it than Queen Marguerite, he presented it to her, and she fashioned for herself a dress out of it. She was wearing it for the first time on that Palm Sunday at Blois, and well do I remember how splendidly it suited her. Although its weight was considerable, she kept the robe on the whole of the day, carrying herself well, and supporting the strain nobly the whole time; had she been of slight build, like so many of the princesses I have known, she must have given way under the great weight, and have had to change her dress earlier in the day.

She walked in her appointed place in the procession, with her countenance uncovered for all the world to see, carrying her palm with royal dignity, and bearing herself humbly, albeit somewhat haughtily, in a manner she was wont to adopt on these occasions, which so added to her beauty that anyone who had never seen her before, and knew not who she was, must have exclaimed: 'There goes a princess who is of a

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different mould from any other in the world.' The courtiers remarked to one another, as they saw her pass, that she did well to carry the palm in her hand, for did she not bear it also over all others in the world, surpassing them all in beauty, grace, and charm. Small wonder if those of us who followed in this procession forgot our devotions in contemplating her beauty, and faltered in our prayers; but in this we were not to blame, for who can find fault with man for admiring an earthly divinity—our Heavenly Father will surely forgive us, seeing that it was He Himself made her so very fair.

When the Queen, her mother, took her to meet her husband in Gascony, there was not a courtier but mourned her departure, and a gloom fell upon the Court as at some dire calamity. Some said: 'The Court is bereft of its beauty,' others that: 'The Court has grown dark, for it has lost its sun,' others again: 'There is now no light to lighten the darkness of the Court,' and: 'The Court and the fair land of France have lost their fairest flower.'

Such were the laments that were heard throughout the country at her departure; some spoke half in anger, some in spite, and all in sorrow at her going, although Queen Louise de Lorraine was left to them, herself a very beautiful, wise, and virtuous princess, of whom I hope to give a worthy account in another place. But the Court had now for some long time grown accustomed to the sight of its fair Queen Marguerite, and could not be

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brought to give her up without a sigh. Many there were who with difficulty restrained themselves from killing M. de Duras, who had come for her on behalf of the King of Navarre his master; this I know for a fact.

Then one day came the news of her death in Auvergne, some eight days previously. In reference to this news, I heard someone say: 'It cannot be true, for if she were indeed dead we should have had an eclipse of the sun, so great is the sympathy between the two, and after that nothing but clouds and gloom.'

Enough has now been said, it seems to me, on the subject of the perfections of her person, although the subject is worthy of a whole volume. I hope, however, to speak again upon it elsewhere, and in the meantime I must say something concerning the lovely soul that was lodged in this fair dwelling-place. Not only was she born with a keen intellect and a receptive mind, but she knew well how to keep them so; letters and reading were a source of great delight to her, and while she was still quite young her knowledge was considerable. It might be said of her that there was no princess, nay, even no woman, in all the world more eloquent than she. When the Poles came to pay their respects to her (I have already referred to their visit in an earlier page), it fell to the lot of the Bishop of Cracovia, the chief ambassador of the party, to make a speech on behalf of the whole company, and, being a learned prelate, he delivered it in Latin. The Queen answered him, without the aid

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of an interpreter, very pertinently, for she had thoroughly understood all he had said to her. All who heard her could not but admire her learning and her eloquence, and with one accord they named her a second Minerva; a very goddess of wisdom.

When the Queen, her mother, conducted her to the King, her husband, she entered Bordeaux in triumph, as was only right, seeing that she was the daughter and sister of a king, and the wife-elect of a king, who was himself one of the first princes of the blood, and Governor of Guienne into the bargain. She made a very fine entry into the town, and the sight—both in respect of the grand decorations that were set forth in her honour, and in respect of her own lovely self—was one never to be forgotten by those who saw it; the people seemed as though they would never weary of gazing upon her, and all praised her to the skies.

Before she actually made her entry, the States of the town came forth to pay their respects to her, according to the custom of the time. The Bishop of Bordeaux spoke on behalf of the clergy; Marshal Biron, in his capacity as mayor, for the townspeople, and as Lieutenant-General of the Forces, he spoke afterwards on his own account; M. Largebaston, chief President of the States, spoke on behalf of the Court. The Queen replied to each in turn (I heard her myself, for I stood near her upon the platform, at her express command), eloquently and wisely, and very much to

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the point, never repeating to one words that she had used to another, although her subject was always the same. In the evening of that day, M. le President, together with several others, came up to me, in the Queen's apartments, and said that he had never in his life heard anything better done. He had had great experience in the exchange of amenities of this kind, and had had the honour of hearing Queen Marguerite and Queen Jeanne, our Queen's predecessors, speak on similar occasions — and these ladies were famous for what men called their golden-tongued eloquence. But the President said they were mere novices in the art of speaking compared with the Queen of Navarre, and that in this respect she showed herself to be a true daughter of her mother.

I repeated what the President had said to me to the Queen-Mother herself, a little later, and she was delighted with what she heard: she went on to say that she could well believe it, for, although she was her own daughter, she could truthfully say that she was one of the most talented princesses in the whole world; she added that Queen Marguerite had never experienced any difficulty in saying what she wanted to say in suitable language. When I have myself heard her speaking with ambassadors or great foreign lords and potentates, I have invariably seen them leave her presence in amazement at her wonderful facility in speaking, and her remarkable command of words.

Were I able to set down word for word one or

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two of her speeches, I am convinced that I should enchant and astonish my readers; but it is not possible for me to reproduce them here, nor, indeed, for anyone, for they were of so exceptional a nature as to be quite impossible of reproduction.

Moreover, while in serious discourses she was all gravity and dignity, when conversation was being carried on in lighter vein her manner was very charming; she could tell a tale in true French fashion, and embellish an account of anything she had seen with admirable skill; excellent, too, was she in repartee; and when she chaffed anyone she did it so neatly that it was quite impossible to take offence.

And if she knew how to talk, she was no less apt with the pen. Her letters alone afford ample proof of her skill as a writer; they are so good, and couched in such elegant terms, that they put all other letters in the shade. Even great writers of the past must needs hang their heads in shame if they venture to compare their own with her letters, for, by the side of them, others read as mere childish babble. No one, after reading her letters, could again think anything of poor Cicero and his letters. It would be a liberal education for anyone to collect her speeches and writings; a study of them would show how quick and clear her mind must have been, how sound and alert her understanding. In short, she was in every respect a true queen, worthy to govern a great kingdom, nay, even a great empire.

After her marriage with the King of Navarre had

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been agreed upon at Blois, there arose many difficulties and much disagreement, all of which owed their origin to Queen Jeanne, who behaved later in so very different a way from the time when she wrote to my mother, who was one of her ladies-in-waiting, and was for the moment at home on a bed of sickness. I have seen the letter myself, written in the Queen's own hand. It is as follows:—‘I write this to you, my dear friend, to encourage you and restore you to health by the good news which the King, my husband, has just sent me. He tells me that he has ventured to ask of the King his young daughter for my son, and his request has been accorded him; it would be useless for me to endeavour to conceal my delight from you.’

There is much to be said on this matter. At the time the marriage was arranged, it happened that there was at Court a lady, whom I will not name, who was about as stupid as she could possibly be. The Queen-Mother, on retiring to rest one night, asked her ladies if they had observed the delight her daughter took in her forthcoming marriage. This foolish lady, who had but small knowledge of Courtlifeandetiquette, wasthe first to thrust herself forward and answer the Queen by saying: ‘Indeed, Madame, it were strange if your daughter were not delighted at such a marriage, since it brings her within reach of the crown, and makes it possible for her one day to be Queen of France, when, as he very well may, her future husband becomes King.’

Upon this the Queen said to her: ‘My friend, you are a fool, and I would rather see you the victim of

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a hundred deaths than your foolish prophecy come true. May long life and prosperity be the lot of the King and, indeed, of all my children.' Whereupon a certain great lady, who was among the Queen's most intimate friends, replied: 'But, Madame, were misfortune to arise—which God forbid!—would you not be well content to see your daughter Queen of France?' But the Queen made answer: 'Although my affection for my daughter is very great, I am convinced that, were that to come to pass, it would be an ill day for France. I would a hundred times rather die than see her Queen; for I fear the people would never have that absolute confidence in the King of Navarre that they now have in my children, for many reasons into which I need not now go.'

And the two prophecies, the one made by a very stupid woman, and the other by a wise princess, were fulfilled, and for several years France felt the truth of what Queen Catherine had said. But to-day she feels it no longer, for, by the grace of God, Henry of Navarre has, by the might of his good sword and the courage of his brave heart, gained such victories and renown that he has undoubtedly a right to the absolute authority which he enjoys to-day, after so much labour and so many reverses. God, in His great mercy, upholds him, even as He upholds us, His humble subjects.

'But if,' the Queen went on to say, 'by the abolition of the Salic Law, the kingdom were to fall to my daughter by right, as other kingdoms have, ere now, come under the rule of a woman, I have no

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doubt but that my daughter Marguerite would prove as capable a ruler as many of the men and kings I have known, if not a more capable one. I can well believe that her reign would be a famous one in history, like to that of the King, her grandfather, and the King, her father, for her mind and heart are alike worthy of a great queen.' She then gave it as her opinion that the Salic Law was a blot on the laws of France, and added that she well remembered M. le Cardinal de Lorraine once telling her how, upon the occasion when he and the other deputies of the Abbaye de Cercan were concluding peace between the two Kings, and there arose some difficult point concerning the Salic Law, M. le Cardinal de Grandvelle, or, as some called him, of Arras, rated the said Sieur de Lorraine roundly in respect of this very law, saying that it was a great abuse, and evidently the work of dreamers and romancers rather than practical statesmen, who framed it without knowing exactly why they did so. That is how the Queen-Mother referred to a law which was, as most are agreed, introduced by Pharamond, who brought the idea with him from his own country. We ought no longer to observe it; for Pharamond was a Pagan lawgiver, and for us Christians to observe a Pagan law is a grave offence against God. Most of our laws, it is true, have come to us from Pagan emperors, but only in so far as they are just and holy are we right in abiding by them. But this Salic Law of Pharamond's is unjust, and contrary to God's law, which is expressly stated in the twenty-seventh chapter

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of Numbers; 'If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter.' And what is more, if we follow the letter of the law very strictly, we can take it to mean that, in default of males, females may reign, from the clause in which it is expressly stated that, 'so long as male heirs exist, daughters may not inherit nor reign'—that is, when there are no males, daughters may reign—and so has the law been interpreted in many cases. And seeing that it is lawful for women to succeed to the crown in Spain, England, Scotland, Hungary, Naples, and Sicily, why not in France? What is just, is surely just all the world over; justice should be no respecter of places.

Did not fair Galatea reign in Gaul, after her marriage with Hercules, which took place on the conquest of Spain, and from which sprang two such valiant Gauls, who won for themselves such fair renown?

Why should the daughters of dukes in this country be considered capable of governing a duchy or a province in justice and mercy, with authority over their people equal to that of a king, while the daughters of kings are not allowed to govern a kingdom, even though it fall to their lot? As if the daughters of France were not as capable of ruling as the daughters of dukes and earls!

No greater proof is to be found of the injustice of the Salic Law than in the fact that, notwithstanding all that ancient chroniclers and historians have written about it, no agreement has yet been

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arrived at as to the derivation and exact meaning of the word '*salic*.'

Some, with Postel, consider that the word owes its origin to the Gauls, and was originally '*gallique*,' and became corrupted into '*salique*,' on account of the close resemblance between 's' and 'g' in ancient manuscript. But in this, as in so many other things, Postel proves himself an unpractical dreamer; I owe this opinion of his erudition to a very famous personage.

Jean Ceval, Bishop of Avranches, a man famous for his antiquarian knowledge, would derive the word from '*salle*,' seeing that it has solely to do with observances taking place in halls and royal palaces.

Claude Seissel, with singular infelicity, looks upon it as coming from the Latin word '*sal*,' as being a law full of 'salt'—that is to say, 'wisdom'; he is, of course, referring to the old metaphorical relation between wisdom and salt.

A certain doctor of laws, Ferrarius Montanus by name, holds that Pharamond was sometimes called '*Salicq*.'

Others again derive the word from Sallogast, the name of one of Pharamond's chief advisers.

And there is yet another set of subtle etymologists who say that on account of the frequent repetition in the wording of the law of the pronouns '*si aliquis*' and '*si aliqua*' the law came to be called the Salique or Salic Law.

A nice conundrum, indeed! And a fine collection of answers to it! Small wonder that the worthy

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Bishop of Arras rated the Cardinal of Lorraine. As I have already said, we have good reason to believe that the letter of the law was not always observed, and there can be no doubt that a beautiful and a virtuous woman is more likely to have a benign influence over the hearts of her subjects, if it should fall to her lot to become queen, than any man, however brave or valiant.

M. du Tillet tells us that it was Queen Clotilde who introduced Christianity into France, and that since her day not one of the queens of France has ever been known to repudiate it—a fact which is surely a great honour to them. The same could not be said for the kings since the day of King Clovis, for Chilperic I. fell into the error of the Arian heresy, and it took two prelates of the Church to bring him back to the true faith, so Gregory of Tours informs us.

And, moreover, was not Catherine, daughter of Charles VI., ordered by the King, her father, to reign in his stead?

Du Tillet goes on to tell us that the daughters of France were always held in such reverence that, no matter whether they were married to the least of her kings, they always took the title of Queen in their own right. The honour was theirs during their lifetime, in proof of the fact that they were held to be daughters of the kings of France, in virtue of their high position. This ancient custom shows us clearly that the daughters of France were as capable of becoming queens as her sons were of becoming kings.

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M. du Tillet has more to say on the subject: 'By the Salic Law, when there was no son to inherit the throne, the daughters inherited. That one among you, Mesdames, Filles de France, who wishes to govern, may, in default of sons, secure the crown; and in spite of this law her daughters have again and again been excluded from the throne of France, for it would seem that Frenchmen cannot brook a woman's rule.'

And elsewhere he says: 'It is strange how long this custom has been attributed to the Salic Law, quite erroneously, for in that law the very opposite is, as a fact, laid down.'

King Charles the Fifth, when arranging the marriage of his daughter, Madame Marie of France, with William of Hainault, in the year 1376, stipulated that the latter should renounce the right to the throne of France which he derived by his marriage with a king's daughter—surely a great point in favour of the opposite reading of the Salic Law.

It certainly seems to me that if, in addition to everything else, women were as skilful in the use of arms as men, they might very well have become unduly conceited and arrogant. They have their good looks, which we do not perhaps esteem as highly as we should, for surely it were better to be ruled by beautiful and virtuous women than by ugly, stupid, disagreeable, and surly men, of which there have been only too many in France ere now!

For my part I should like to know whether this kingdom is the better for the numberless blundering, foolish, tyrannical, simple, do-nothing, and

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idiot kings it has been blest with! (I intend no slur on our brave Pharamond, our Clodion, Clovis, Pepius, Martel, Charles, Louis, our Jehan, our François, our Henri, for they were brave and great-hearted rulers indeed: happy the people who owned their sway!) Would it not have been better if the daughters of France, in so many cases wise and prudent women, worthy of all respect, had ruled in their place? A glance at the state of affairs during a regency, when a queen-mother held the reins of government in her hands, would furnish a sufficient answer to my question.

How did Fredegonde administer the affairs of France during the minority of her son, King Clotaire? So wisely and so skilfully that before he died he came to be monarch over Gaul and the greater part of Germany.

It was the same with Mathilde, wife of Dagobert, acting for her son, King Clovis II.; the same, too, many years later, in the case of Blanche, mother of Saint Louis, who comported herself with such far-seeing wisdom, so I have read, that, in just the same way as the Roman emperors all called themselves Augustus, in honour of the great Emperor Augustus and in commemoration of his long and prosperous reign, so too all the queen-mothers of old, after the decease of the kings, their husbands, desired that they might be called Blanche, in respectful memory of this great princess. It is true M. du Tillet does not quite agree with me on this point, but I have it on the authority of a very great statesman.

To take examples nearer our own time: Isabella

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of Bavaria, at the request of the Council, acted as regent for her husband, Charles VI., when that king lost the use of his senses; and again, Madame de Bourbon acted for her little brother, King Charles VIII., during his minority; Madame Louise of Savoy for King François I., and the Queen-Mother for her son, Charles IX.

If, therefore, foreign ladies (for none of the above, with the exception of Madame de Bourbon, were daughters of France) have been held capable of governing our country, why should not our own princesses also rule over the land of their birth, for which they are sure to feel an affection and a regard that cannot be felt in the same manner by others?

I should also like to know wherein the last three of our kings have surpassed the last three of our princesses, Elizabeth, Claude, and Marguerite? Had it fallen to their lot to become queens of France, I cannot see that they would not have governed with as much success as their brothers. I have heard it said by many great men, men of wide experience and sound knowledge, that perhaps we should have been spared some of the misfortunes that have befallen us, and that are still likely to befall us, had we seen a queen upon the throne of France; the reasons they allege are too lengthy to transcribe here. And yet, in spite of all, there are still people who babble nonsense about observing the Salic Law. Are they unaware that the Germans, from whom we are descended, were in the habit of summoning their women to their state councils as

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well as their men, as we read in the pages of Tacitus? From this we must conclude that the Salic Law was an importation of a later date, for in the days of the Germans women were certainly thought worthy of ruling over their fellow-subjects. Alas! it is but too true, that women have been excluded from many of their just rights and privileges because they could not, like men, vindicate them at the point of the sword. Where are now our brave knights - errant of old, Roland, Renaud, Ogier, Oliver, Deudon, Graffon, Yvon; where can such now be found to succour the damsel in distress; or (and to return to our subject) to uphold the rights of our good Queen Marguerite! So far from enjoying the possession of even a single acre of the realm of France, from which she was so nobly descended, and to which she had every right, both human and divine, she was not even allowed to hold her province of Auvergne, which certainly belonged to her, for she had inherited it direct from her mother, the Queen. She retired to the château of Usson, amid the fortresses of the mountains and rocks of Auvergne, a dwelling which could have had but little in common with the great city of Paris, over which she should have held sway, both in her own right and in the right of the King, her husband. But the pity of it is that Paris will have naught to do with either one or the other. Perhaps if the King and Queen were still united in bonds of love and friendship, as once they were, things would go better, and they would together be able to enforce their rule. (God has since, in His great

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mercy, brought their reconciliation to pass—in a happy hour, indeed!)

I once heard M. de Pibrac remark that the Navarre alliance was a fatal one in this respect—that it showed a husband living in disagreement with his wife, just as, in other days, Louis Hutin, King of France and of Navarre, had lived inharmoniously with Marguerite of Bourgogne, daughter of Duke Robert III.; and Philip the Long, King of France and Navarre, with Jeanne, daughter of Othelin, Comte of Bourgogne, who, poor lady, proved in the end innocent of the crimes imputed to her; and again, as Charles the Handsome, King of France and Navarre, lived with Blanche, daughter of Othelin, Comte of Bourgogne, who was his first wife. King Henri d'Albret proved a bad husband to Marguerite de Valois, of that there can be no doubt, and very badly did he treat her. Had it not been for King François, her brother, he would have done her still greater injury, and insulted her still further; the young King rated him soundly, and threatened him with dire punishment for paying so little honour to his sister, seeing that she came from so ancient and renowned a stock.

I have it on the authority of a princess that the Queen saved her husband's life at the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew (she had only been married to him six days when that awful calamity occurred). Certain is it that his name was down on the list of the proscribed, for the cry was all against those who were the prime movers in the affair, and for attacking as it were the fountain-head, and the

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names of the King of Navarre, the Prince de Condé, the Admiral, and others, were in everyone's mouth. But the Queen threw herself on her knees at the feet of King Charles and begged for the life of her lord and master. Charles was none too easily persuaded to grant her her request, for all that she was his sister. I am speaking only from hearsay. She chafed miserably at the idea of the massacre, and was instrumental in saving several lives, including even a simple Gascon noble (Leran, I think his name was), who came, covered with wounds, and hid himself beneath the bed on which she lay. His murderers pursued him to the very door of her room, but she drove them away; for, like all true daughters of France, she was never cruel, but ever tender towards sufferers in distress.

They say that the quarrel between her and the King, her husband, arose in the first instance out of their religious differences, for both were zealous in upholding what they thought to be the true faith. The Queen, one day, visited Pau, the principal town of Béarn, and, as was usual with her, ordered Mass to be celebrated in the church. A secretary of the King, her husband, one le Pin, who had once been in the service of the late Admiral, took such umbrage at this manifestation of her faith that he put in prison several of the townspeople who had taken part in it. The Queen was gravely displeased at his behaviour, but when she remonstrated with him he so far forgot himself as to speak in louder tones than he should have done, and made use of some very indiscreet language, even in the presence

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of the King, who did not hesitate to reprimand him sharply and banish him from his sight.

He said le Pin had acted upon the edict that forbade anyone, upon pain of death, to say or hear Mass. In spite of the King's attitude towards the fellow, and the respect he had paid to her prejudices, the Queen, Heaven only knows why, took mortal offence at the occurrence, and swore never to set foot in that country again, declaring that she had always hoped to be allowed to be free and untrammelled in the exercise of her religious beliefs. She thereupon left the district, and right jealously did she keep her oath. I have heard it said that never did she take anything to heart so much as any interference in the exercise of her religion.

She had a fancy to see the Queen, her mother, and went into France to see her and the King, her brother, to whom she was very much attached. But on this occasion his reception of her was anything but gracious; she could hardly help observing that a great change had come over everything since her last appearance at Court; several persons had been raised to eminent positions of whom she had never even heard, and to whom she found it very difficult to pay court, seeing that they were in no way her equal. She treated them, indeed, as I saw for myself, with a lofty disdain that showed how dauntless was her spirit. Alas! her behaviour at this time had doubtless something to do with the misfortune that soon befell her. Had she lowered her pride a little—no matter how little—she might

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have been spared some of the indignities she was forced to suffer later.

I will give an instance of her manner at this time: while the King, her brother, was in Poland, she learnt that M. du Gua, a great favourite with the King, had made some very ill-natured remarks about her, such as would be likely to set brother and sister at variance. After some little time M. du Gua returned from Poland, bearing letters from the King to his sister; he carried them to the Queen's apartment, and, on delivering them to her, endeavoured to kiss her hand. I was present at the time, and saw how angry she became on seeing him enter the room; as he approached, her face became crimson with wrath, and she burst out: 'It is well for you, du Gua, that you come to me with letters from my brother, for so fondly do I love him that anyone coming to me with anything from him bears a safeguard in his hand. Were it not so, I would inform you how to speak of such a princess as I am, sister to your sovereign lord and master.' M. du Gua replied, humbly enough: 'Madame, I would never have ventured into your presence, knowing how little favour I have in your sight, had I not had good reason for doing so; my passport this day is a letter from the King, my master, who loves you, and whom you also love.' He then proceeded to make his excuses, and denied that he had ever spoken otherwise than very respectfully of the sister of his King. But she dismissed him curtly, denouncing him as her cruel enemy, and declaring that she

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would consider him such until the day of her death.

After a little time the King wrote to Madame de Dampierre and begged her to do her utmost, for love of him, to induce the Queen of Navarre to pardon M. du Gua and take him back into her good graces. Madame de Dampierre undertook this task very unwillingly, for she knew the Queen's disposition only too well ; but since the King loved her, and had confided in her, she felt she owed it to him to risk all and do her best to bring about the reconciliation. Finding the Queen in a particularly happy frame of mind, one day, she broached the subject, reminding her that, if she desired to retain the favour of the friendship of the King, her brother, who was King of France, she would do well to pardon M. du Gua and forget the past, for the King loved him well, and seemed to favour him more than any other of his courtiers. If she did so, and extended her friendship to him once more, she might look for good service at his hands, seeing that he had so great an influence over the King, his master ; it were surely far better policy to have such a man on her side, as it were, than against her, for if he liked he could do her grievous injury. The lady called to the Queen's mind the case of Mesdames Magdalene and Marguerite, in the reign of King François I., the former of whom had in later years become Queen of Scotland, and the latter Duchess of Savoy. They were her aunts, and although they lacked not pride and high birth, they had lowered themselves so far as to pay court

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to M. de Sourdis, who was but a Master of the Wardrobe to the King, their father, and entreat him to use his influence with that King, and persuade him to take them once more into his good graces. Madame de Dampierre begged the Queen of Navarre to follow the example of her aunts in her treatment of M. du Gua.

But Queen Marguerite, after having heard Madame de Dampierre to the end, replied with great coolness, although not without an occasional smile: ‘Madame de Dampierre, what you say would apply well enough for yourself, who have need of royal favour and royal mercy; were I you, the words you have addressed to me would be the most suitable in the world; I would, in that case, willingly listen to them, even would I proceed to put them into practice. But, as for myself, who am a king’s daughter, and the sister of kings, and indeed a king’s wife, they profit me nothing, for, being what I am, it would ill become me to beg a favour of my brother the King, for I consider him to be of so good a natural disposition, and so mindful of his duty in all he does, that he will never deny me his favour, whether du Gua begs for it or not. If he did, he would be acting in a manner unworthy of his honour and his majesty. But should he act so far contrary to his nature as to forget what is due to me, I should, on my honour, prefer to lose his good graces than be dependent for them on du Gua. If my brother is worthy to be a king worthy of my love and of that of his people, I, his sister, am also worthy to be a queen, and loved

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not only by him, but by all the world. My aunts, as you say, may have lowered themselves so far as you allege, but that is nothing to me: their example is not my law, nor shall I imitate it, nor form myself on their model, but on my own.' When she had spoken thus, she became silent and meditative, and Madame de Dampierre withdrew; the Queen took what she had said in very good part, for she had a great liking for her.

And on another occasion, when M. d'Epéronon went into Gascony after the death of Monsieur (a journey which, from all accounts, was undertaken with many objects in view), he met the King of Navarre at Pamiers, and right glad were the two to see each other again. At that time M. d'Epéronon was practically King of France, so great was the favour in which the King, his master, held him.

After they had embraced one another very warmly, the King of Navarre begged d'Epéronon to come to see him at Nerac, on his way back from Toulouse, and the latter promised to do so. The King went on in advance in all haste to make fitting preparations for his welcome, and the Queen of Navarre, who was at Nerac, and had, for many reasons, a mortal hatred of M. d'Epéronon, told her husband that she would depart, lest her presence might mar the festivities, adding that she was quite unable to bear the sight of M. d'Epéronon without losing control of her temper, and that she would doubtless anger the King by her behaviour. But the latter begged of her to stay to help him receive the Sieur d'Epéronon, and lay

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aside her animosity towards him, inasmuch as it was very important for both of them that they should be on good terms with the King's favourite.

'Very well, Sire,' replied the Queen, 'since it is your pleasure to command, I will stay and welcome him, out of respect for you, and in consideration of the obedience which is your due.' But she turned to one of her ladies and said: 'I can answer for it, that, whilst he stays at Nerac, I shall be clothed in a garb that I have never donned before, that of dissimulation and hypocrisy; for I shall draw as it were a mask over my features and he will see nothing but kindness and welcome there, and I shall also put the seal of discretion upon my lips. Judging from the outside, men shall say that my heart is well disposed towards my guest, but I can in no wise answer that it shall be so, for none but God Himself can soften my heart to tenderness when once it has become hardened against an enemy.'

So, for her husband's sake, for she still honoured him, she disguised her feelings, and with such success that, when M. d'Epéron approached to make his bow to her, she received him as graciously as the King himself could have wished, even as she had promised. The room was crowded with men and women eager and curious to see what reception she would accord to the favourite, and all were amazed at its friendliness; the King too, and M. d'Epéron, were content; but the clearer-sighted, who knew the Queen more intimately, still entertained doubts. She herself said, when

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speaking of the event, that she had played a very unwilling part in the comedy,—my information on this head I have gathered from an unimpeachable source.

From the two episodes just related the reader may form an estimate of the Queen's high courage, wherein, so I have heard the Queen, her mother, say, she resembled her father the King. She told me that not one of her children resembled her father more nearly than Queen Marguerite, whether in general appearance, temperament, and features, or in courage and generosity; and she went on to say how King Henri, during the lifetime of King François, his father, had never been able to bring himself to truckle to the Cardinal de Tournon or the Admiral d'Annebault, who were such favourites of the King; nor again could he ever be induced to seek for peace from the Emperor Charles, which he could have had for the asking—for the same reason, that he was too high-spirited. Like father, like daughter. Yet, poor daughter, she paid heavily for her high spirit! I can call to mind an infinity of indignities which she received at the hands of the Court (indignities which are too odious to specify), even up to the crowning indignity of all, when she was driven away altogether, upon a charge of which she was entirely innocent, as, indeed, it has since been proved to my certain knowledge, again and again.

The War of the League broke out shortly after; and the Queen of Navarre, fearing for her life,

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seeing that she was so pronounced a Catholic, withdrew to Agen, a town in a district that had been given her by the kings, her brothers, to enjoy during her lifetime: and since she felt the Catholic religion was at stake, and must be upheld by every means in her power, and the other heretic religion, as she deemed it, rooted up, she decided to fortify her stronghold and make the best stand she could against the enemy. But she was ill served, and had an evil adviser in Madame de Duras, who, so they say, had great influence over her, and who, in her name, exacted many extortionate sums of money from the people. They turned against their lady at this, and sought secretly for a means of ridding themselves of her. At this juncture M. le Maréchal de Matignon made an attack upon the town, in obedience to an express command joyfully given him by the King in order further to aggravate his sister, whom he seemed to have grown to dislike more and more as time went on. This second attempt upon the town—the first had failed—was carried out so dexterously by Marshal Matignon, aided as he was by the inhabitants, that the town was taken. This success was followed up with such determination that the poor Queen found there was nothing for it but to jump up behind one of her gentlemen and ride for her life. She covered twelve long miles without dismounting, and on the next day the same, and finally sought refuge in the strongest fortress in France—namely, Carlat. While she was there, thinking herself in safety, she was sold into the hands of the enemy by

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the machinations of her brother the King, who proved himself a very crafty strategist. She came out in defiance of her foes, and fell into the hands of the Marquis de Canillac, Governor of Auvergne, who led her a prisoner to the château of Usson, another very strong fortress, not to say impregnable. Louis XI., wily fox that he was, was in part responsible for this, for he had fashioned it into a prison a thousand times more secure than Loches, Bois de Vincennes or Lusignan.

And there we see this poor princess a prisoner, no longer treated as a daughter of France, with the respect due to a great princess. But if her body was held captive, her brave heart was free as ever; it never failed her once, but bore her nobly through all her afflictions. What cannot be effected by a noble heart, united to great beauty! He whose duty it was to hold her prisoner became in a very short time a prisoner himself, fast bound by his fair captive's charms. Poor man! what did he expect? Did he hope to keep as a prisoner, captive in her prison, one who could, by the brilliancy of her eyes and the loveliness of her fair countenance, bind all the world in chains as tight as those of any hopeless convict!

The Marquis was enchanted with her beauty, and fell madly in love with her; and she, with thoughts far removed from the allurements and delights of love, nevertheless played her cards so skilfully that she gained the upper hand and drove the Marquis from the place, amazed, we may be sure, at strategy that succeeded so well. And how the King hated

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her for having cheated him! Alas! to think how well this brother and sister once had loved each other! To think of the times when we were privileged to hear them talking to one another, freely and openly, as they always did! How good their conversation was to listen to! And how times have changed since we saw them dancing together in the great ballroom, so perfectly in accord! The King invariably led her out first to the dance on the occasion of a State ball. The grace and majesty of the King was only equalled by that of his sister. Often have I watched them dancing the Spanish pavan together, and admired the ease with which they took the graceful steps; it was indeed an edifying sight, of which none in the whole assembly seemed ever to tire. No one, I am convinced, ever saw a pavan better danced than by this royal brother and sister, and I ought to know what I am saying, who have watched the dance both in Spain and in Scotland.

I have also seen them dance the Italian minuet, now walking down the room with grave and stately step, now majestically gliding forward, now curtseying to one another, and performing the various other graceful passages that occur in the dance, in a manner unsurpassed by anyone in the world, whether prince or peasant. The Queen was very fond of a slow and stately dance of this kind, which displayed her graceful person and the grave dignity of her bearing to better effect than the more lively jigs and reels of the time. For the latter she cared little, although in these too she acquitted herself

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right well; they were better suited to the more ordinary charms and graces of other women.

She liked occasionally to indulge in a torch dance, and I remember how once, when she was at Lyons, at the time of the King's return from Poland, on the occasion of the marriage of one of her daughters, she danced this dance before a crowd of foreigners from Savoy, Piedmont, Italy, and elsewhere, who declared that they had never in their lives seen anything to equal it, as well they might. One of the spectators, carried away by his enthusiasm, went on to say that this Queen, unlike other ladies, had herself no need of the torch she carried in her hand, for the light that flashed from her fine eyes—which never flickered and went out like other lights—was surely enough to lead the dance along, seeing that it was bright enough to lighten the shadows by night, and even by day, though the sun were shining, to add something to its dazzling rays.

Fortune played an evil trick on the rest of us, as well as upon Queen Marguerite, in that we were deprived of further sight of this bright torch, nay, even, we might call it a sun which, when evil days befell it, instead of shedding its warmth and brightness upon us, as heretofore, was clouded over and went and hid itself in the mountain fastnesses of Auvergne. If only she had retired to some port or noble harbour by the sea, where she might have lit up the way to the storm-tossed mariner and brought him safe to shore, she might have found a more honourable retreat, nay, a

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more profitable one both for herself and us. Ah! people of Provence, well might you beg and entreat her to come and dwell by your coasts and render them even more famous than they were already! Men would have come from all quarters of the world to see this wonder of the world, just as of yore they came to Rhodes to see the famous beacon there. But, hidden amid the mountains of Auvergne, she is now to us no more than a beautiful dream! Ah! ancient city of Marseilles, how happy had you been had she honoured your port with the bright beacon that flashed from eyes that nothing seemed to dim! And to think that all the while the land of Provence was hers by right, as were so many other lands, to say nothing of France itself. Woe to the stubbornness that kept husband and wife from a reconciliation! Had she been a bad queen, a malicious, avaricious, or tyrannical princess, as so many have been in France in times past, and possibly so many more will be in the future, I should have had naught to say; but she was all good, all fair, all generous, giving everything away and keeping nothing for herself, charitable to the poor, and ever solicitous of their welfare. Her generosity put all the world to shame. One day she made such presents to the Court for the New Year that the Kings, her brothers, viewed them with astonishment, and were constrained to follow her example.

She once gave to Queen Louise de Lorraine, as a New Year's gift, a fan made of mother-of-pearl, set with enormous pearls and other precious stones,

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so beautiful that it was looked upon as a veritable masterpiece, and estimated at more than fifteen hundred crowns. Queen Louise, in return, gave her what the Spanish called 'puntas,' richly set with precious stones, which must have cost some hundreds of crowns.

In short, Queen Marguerite was liberal to a fault; I say it with all due respect to the empresses of olden times, as described by Suetonius, Pliny, and others, but our Queen, in her generosity and magnificence, far surpassed them. Whether she was at Court or in the provinces, whether travelling in her litter or in her coach, or on her gaily caparisoned palfrey, everything about her was rich in ornamentation.

Those who saw, with me, such fine trappings and such gilded splendour will understand me. And to think of her now, deprived of all her splendour! To think of her, for the last seven years, confined to a gloomy fortress! May her patience not forsake her, poor lady, for she has every need of it; but, like all the truly great, she is strong in the virtue of self-control and bears her fate resignedly, after the manner of the philosophers of old.

Moreover, to refer once more to her innate goodness, it is that which has, in my opinion, been in part the cause of her misfortune, for, although she had on several occasions opportunities for revenging herself upon her enemies, which others would have been, perhaps, only too ready to take advantage of, she neglected such opportunities, saying that she left vengeance to God.

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M. du Gua once said to her, on the occasion of her threatening him: 'Madame, you are always so kind that I have never heard of anyone to whom you have given offence. I can hardly think you intend to let me be the first to suffer at your hand, who am your very humble servant.' Easily as she might have done him ill, she refrained, and did not deign to take vengeance upon him. It is true that when the news that he had been put to death reached her, she, being on a bed of sickness at the time, simply said: 'I am only sorry I am not well, the better to enjoy such good news.' But there was this about her, that when anyone humbled himself before her and sought for pardon, she was always ready to grant it, just as a lion is too noble a creature ever to condescend to injure those who abase themselves before him.

I can well remember once, when Marshal Biron was acting as lieutenant for the King in Guienne, an accident of war took him near Nerac (or it may be that he went there expressly, I cannot be certain), when the King and Queen of Navarre both happened to be there. There was a sharp skirmish, led on his side by the King of Navarre in person, in the garb of a simple captain of the line; and so ably did he manipulate his little force that he suffered no losses in the fight. When it was well-nigh over the Marshal, out of sheer bravado, fired a volley of cannon at the town, and the Queen, who had come out on the walls to watch the progress of the struggle, nearly came in for a share of the fight, for a ball fell within a very few feet of her Majesty.

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The circumstance angered her mightily, not only on account of Marshal Biron's lack of respect in venturing to come and brave her in her stronghold, but from the fact that he had express orders from the King never to make war within five miles of the particular spot in which she happened to have taken up her abode. He had disobeyed orders in this case, and the Queen of Navarre fell into such a rage against the zealous Marshal that she lost no time in thinking out how she might avenge herself upon him.

A year and a half later she found herself at Court, where Marshal Biron was also present, the King having summoned him out of Guienne, to his side, for fear of further disturbance, seeing that the King of Navarre had threatened to take up arms again if Biron were not removed from Guienne. The Queen of Navarre still felt very bitter against the Marshal, and made no secret of the fact; she treated him everywhere with contumely and contempt, and lost no opportunity of speaking ill of him, telling everyone of the way he had insulted her. At length Marshal Biron, dreading the hatred of this daughter and sister of the kings, his masters, and having a shrewd knowledge of the princess's naturally kind disposition, conceived the idea of seeking pardon at her hand, and humbly apologising to her; and she, generous as ever, became friendly towards him as soon as she had heard him to the end, and assured him that thenceforth the past should be forgotten. It so happened that a certain nobleman, who knew how harshly

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she had been wont to speak of Biron, returned to the Court just in time to see the kind way in which she was now treating him. He was greatly astonished, and told the Queen that he would never have believed it possible in the light of the insults she had received at the hands of the Marshal. But she replied that, inasmuch as he had confessed his sin, and sought her forgiveness in all humility, she saw no reason why she should not grant it; it was not as if he intended to continue in the attitude of blustering bravado which he had adopted when she was at Nerac. The incident shows clearly how small a part vindictiveness played in the Queen's character, and how unlike she was in this respect to her grandmother, Queen Anne, as I showed when I related the episode concerning the latter and Marshal de Gié.

I could bring forward many other instances of the kindness of the Queen of Navarre and her readiness to forgive her enemies.

Rebours, one of her maidens, who died at Chenonceaux, had once in her lifetime caused her very grave displeasure, but she never punished her for her wrong-doing, and when she lay sick unto death the Queen went to see her, and, after reproving her, she said: 'The poor girl has now much to bear, but she has done a great wrong in her time. May God pardon her, even as I do myself!' Such was the revenge she took on an erring daughter!

Alphonse, the great King of Naples, a man very susceptible to the beauty of women, used to say

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that beauty was a sign of goodness and gentleness, just as a fine flower is the sign of good fruit. And further, as the late Queen Isabella of Castille, that wise and virtuous princess, used to say : 'The fruit of mercy in a queen of great beauty, noble heart, and unstained honour, is sweeter than all the vengeance in the world, no matter what good cause for vengeance she may have.'

Our Queen ever held to this rule, in conformity with what is commanded of God, whom she never ceased to love, fear, and serve in all humility and devotion. When she was abandoned by the world she found refuge in God alone, and never let a day pass by without worshipping at His altar, never omitting to hear Mass, often partaking of the Holy Sacrament, and finding rest and consolation in a daily reading of the Scriptures.

She is a great reader and never fails to obtain possession of every new book that is written ; when she has once begun a book, no matter how long it may be, she never stops reading it until she has come to the end, sometimes even at the sacrifice of meals and sleep. She is herself a writer of both prose and verse, and her compositions show that she is a master of the art of writing, her style being pleasant and her choice of subjects invariably happy.

Her verses she either sings herself (for she has a fine voice, which blends very agreeably with the lute) or has them sung to her by a choir of little boys whom she has collected round her to cheer her solitude and help to pass the time. In this quiet

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way does she spend her life, choosing a peaceful existence in preference to a life of intrigue and turmoil.

She has honoured me by several times writing to me from her solitary prison, in reply to my perhaps somewhat presumptuous requests for news of her. But, after all, is she not daughter and sister of my kings, and might I not know of her health, at least! Happy enough am I to hear that it is good, I can assure you! The first letter she wrote to me ran thus:

‘By your remembrance of me, a thing as wonderful to me as it is gratifying, I judge that you have kept the affection you once had for our house—for all that remains, that is, of so miserable a shipwreck. But, in whatever state our house may be, it is always ready to serve you, and I must reckon myself fortunate in that my name still clings to the memory of old friends, such as yourself. I hear that, like myself, you have chosen a peaceful life; happy are those who can attain thereto, ’tis a mercy God has granted me these five years, housing me in an ark of refuge whither, Heaven be praised, the storms and tempests of the world cannot come! If by any means in the power still remaining to me I can help you, be assured that I shall be more than ready to do so.’

Surely these are noble words, bearing witness to a noble fortitude and resignation under an unhappy lot. It does, indeed, mean something to be born of an ancient house, the greatest in the world, to draw so splendid a heritage of courage

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from royal ancestors—father, grandfather, great-grandfather, a noble line of kings. And to think that, as she said, out of so great a shipwreck she alone remained, unrevered and unhonoured by her people! It is my belief that one day the people of France will suffer sadly for the miseries our Queen endured at their hands, as they are bound to suffer for the dreadful War of the League. But it will not be yet, for, thanks to the valour and wisdom and good government of our King, France has never been so flourishing as she is to-day, nor so tranquil, nor blest with such able rulers. But, oh! how ill-advised is he who trusts in the affections of the people! How different was the treatment of the descendants of Augustus Cæsar by the Romans from that which has been meted out by the French to their kings during the last hundred years, and even to the Kings François I. and Henri II., to whom they owed so much. But for them France would have long ago fallen a prey to the enemy that for ever hovered at her gates, greatest of whom was that notoriously ambitious prince, the Emperor Charles. And to think they could be so ungrateful, these people, to the daughter of such kings, Queen Marguerite, sole remaining princess of France! It is easy to understand why the wrath of God fell upon them at the last, for nothing is to Him more odious than ingratitude, especially ingratitude towards kings and queens, who take the place of God on this our earth. And thou, false goddess, Fortune, how well thou showest that there is no one so loved of heaven, or so

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blessed of Mother Nature, that he can venture to rely on thy favour for a single day! Surely 'tis a great honour to thee to bring low so perfect a lady, so peerless a princess!

I am writing this the while there rages round me the bloodiest war we have had for ten years. Now must I draw to a conclusion, but there were no conclusion did I not intend to speak of our great Queen in another place; I could write of her without ceasing and it were impossible to weary the reader with so fine a subject at one's command, no matter at what length one wrote.

I pray Heaven you may live long, princess, in spite of fortune. Whether on earth or in heaven thou canst not be other than immortal. Were it not that thy praises have been upon the lips of everyone, I would undertake to sing them again and yet again, for if ever a celestial being appeared on earth thou art she!

CHAPTER VI

OF CERTAIN DAUGHTERS OF THE NOBLE HOUSE OF FRANCE

I

MADAME YOLAND DE FRANCE

It is a truth that has been brought home to me by many great personages, both gentlemen and ladies of the Court, that as a rule the daughters of the house of France have ever been, and now are, remarkable for their exceeding goodness or their wit, their graciousness, or their generosity. And, in confirmation of this statement, those who make it do not give as instances the princesses who lived in ancient times but only those of whom they have themselves had knowledge, or of whom they have heard their fathers and grandfathers speak.

At the head of this list of remarkable princesses stands Madame Yoland de France, wife of the Duke of Savoy and Prince of Piedmont.

She was a most accomplished lady, and a kind sister to her brother, King Louis XI. She rather favoured the party of Charles, Duc de Bourgogne, who was her brother-in-law, since he had married Madame Yoland's elder sister, Catherine, who, poor lady, died shortly after her marriage. When

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Yoland saw how this Duc Charles prospered in his own country, and how formidable a neighbour he might prove, she did all she could to keep on good terms with him, and aided him considerably in the management of his affairs. When he came to die, and King Louis XI. cast eyes upon his possessions and dependencies, as well as those of Savoy, with a view to taking them to himself, she, being, as I said, a clever woman, sought an interview with the King, her brother, and it was arranged that they should meet at Plessis-les-Tours. Upon her arrival the King went out to meet her, and, after saluting her, and embracing her in true brotherly fashion, he said to her, half laughing and half seriously: 'Madame la Bourguignonne, you are right welcome to our Court.' And she, making him a very deep curtsey, replied: 'Sire, I am no Bourguignonne, if you please, but a loyal Frenchwoman, and your very humble servant.' The King then took her by the arm and led her to his room, with every appearance of kindness and goodwill. But she, being very clear-sighted, and knowing her brother's disposition well, thought she had better not stay long with him, and determined to depart as soon as ever she had settled her affairs.

The King, for his part, who knew the lady with whom he had to deal, did not urge her to remain: he knew how, sooner or later, they were bound to annoy one another: wherefore, before she had spent so much as eight days by her brother's side, she returned again to her duchy, sufficiently ill-satisfied with the King.

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Philippe de Comines gives us the history of this episode at great length. The men of her time speak of this princess as a very able woman, who owed nothing to her brother, the King, for all his chaff about the *parti bourguignon*. Her manner towards him when they met was extremely gentle; as a fact, she was loth to offend him, and well she might be, for none was more practised in dissimulation than he—a man a thousand times more clever than his clever sister, whether in word or deed.

II

MADAME JEANNE DE FRANCE

JEANNE DE FRANCE, daughter of King Louis XI., was a woman of great intellectual attainments, and so pious withal that, after her death, men held her for a saint and a worker of miracles, on account of the holiness of the life she led after her husband, Louis XII., saw fit to repudiate her. She went into retirement at Bourges, where, for the rest of her life, she devoted herself to God and His poor, never once complaining, in her prayers and intercessions, of the wrong that she had suffered at the hands of her husband. The King, her husband, declared that she had been married to him by force, and that he had only consented out of fear of that masterful king, her father, Louis XI. Never since he had wed her had he known his wife intimately, although they had been some time married and

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had been in the habit of sleeping together. His statement was accepted as true, and no one, least of all the poor discarded wife herself, troubled to confute it. In that she acted wisely, and very differently from that wife of King Charles le Gros, Richarde, a Scottish princess, who also was repudiated by her husband, and who, when he declared that he had never touched her, remarked: 'Tis well, seeing that on my husband's oath I am still a virgin,' by which the princess seemed to imply that she made a mock of his oath and of her maidenhood.

But, as a matter of fact, the allegation of King Louis is open to grave doubt, seeing how many times he had slept with his wife, and it is unlikely that he would have dared to repeat it in front of her father or her brother. It was only when the latter were both dead, and not until then, that he adopted the policy of denying everything, in order that he might marry the beautiful widowed queen on whom he had set his heart. It is true that to a great king anything is possible, and whether the wife herself ever complained about his treatment to the King, her father, or her brother, we shall never know.

There is the somewhat similar case of Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre, who was first married to the Duc de Cleves at Chastelleraut; but she was at that time only twelve years of age, and that the marriage was broken before it had been consummated in this case can easily be believed, in view of the wife's tender years. Although even in her case

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her second husband, the King of Navarre, before he married her, was troubled with doubts on the subject, and begged Madame le Seneschale de Poitou, my grandmother, not to conceal the truth from him, for he felt that she indeed must know, who was lady-in-waiting at that time to the maiden's mother, the Queen of Navarre. But my grandmother assured him that his wife was as pure as on the day of her birth, whereupon M. de Vendôme (he was not King of Navarre until after he married her) lost no time in making her his wife.

But, in respect of older women who have lived long with their husbands, such declarations of continence are indeed difficult to credit, unless they be made by husbands who are *frigidi et maleficiati*, of whom there have been many, or by husbands who are known to have made a holy vow, such, for instance, as Alfonso of Aragon, who though he had married a very beautiful woman and lived with her for many years, never knew her intimately, as he was in the habit of constantly asserting. Some think that this strange vow was taken by him in order that he might save his soul alive, as if marriage brought damnation to us poor mortals! There are other possible reasons for it, all of which are far more likely. There is the case of Queen Edelfruda, of whom one reads that she had been three times married but died a virgin and was straightway canonised as a saint. It is an incredible story, unless one is to believe that she expressly chose eunuchs for her husbands, or men who were impotent.

It has been the lot of many women to find them-

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selves married to men incapable of consummating their marriage. There have been many cases in France and elsewhere within the last twenty years, but in only one case did the parties concerned wish to hide the fact; in all the others the fact was revealed as soon as discovered. There was, however, one beautiful lady in Piedmont, by name Madame de Montjovan, daughter of the Comtesse de Poncalier, sister of M. de Raitz, who for a period of ten years endured the impotency of her husband, awaiting day by day the happy hour in which he might recover his powers. During all that time she maintained a discreet silence respecting her maidenhood, until at last she could bear it no longer, but, listening to the promptings of nature, she revealed the whole state of affairs and, obtaining a divorce, shortly afterwards married M. d'Araconis, a great and noble lord of Piedmont and a favourite of his Highness, who ruled over the whole of that district.

Such marriages are, indeed, void, but it is, as I have said, hard to believe a man in full possession of his senses who swears that, although he has lived for many years in company with his wife, he has never known her intimately. Such oaths are, to say the least of it, suspicious. I could as well believe that all the pretty women in a town went free after it had fallen into the hands of the enemy's soldiers. I have heard of two great Huguenot ladies who were seduced by two men, whom I know well, at the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew (for at that time every human

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passion ran riot), and who afterwards made a terrible outcry about it, swearing that they would rather have died than endure such infamous treatment as they had had to endure. Do you believe them? Nay, such oaths are of no account, I say, for why should they have said anything about it if the remembrance did not afford them a certain amount of pleasure!

I once heard a somewhat similar tale while I happened to be staying at the town of Fondi, near Naples, of the Signora Julia Gonzaga, who had in her time been married to Ascanio Colonne. She was considered in Italy the most beautiful woman of her day, and the fame of her beauty, as I was told, spread even as far as the Levant—(I have seen her portrait, painted when she was a widow, several times, and can well believe it)—and to the city of Constantinople. Wherefore Barbarossa, when he was acting as Lord High Admiral for the Grand Turk, having, with great and solemn pomp, as we are told, sailed past the Messina lighthouse and along the coast of Calabria, making great ravages as he went, came, in the neighbourhood of Naples, upon the town of Fondi, and arriving there in the middle of the night, at a time extremely favourable to his plans, landed two thousand Turks and took the place by storm.

When they had gained entrance to the town they directed their attack to the castle, where the aforementioned Julia Gonzaga lay in bed asleep; she, when she heard the alarm, was so completely taken by surprise that she leapt out of bed and

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threw herself out of the window in her nightdress and fled to the mountains: she was only just in time, for the Turks entered her room a moment after she had left it. It was said that Barbarossa wanted to make a present of her to the Grand Turk, and that he had only undertaken the enterprise with that end in view, and he was very crest-fallen when he realised that his prey had, after all, escaped him. But the unfortunate lady, as it turned out, only escaped Scylla to fall into Charybdis, for, in saving herself from the Turks, she fell into the hands of a band of outlaws, some of whom recognised her, while others did not. I leave you to decide as to whether such an attractive damsel, meeting with such a notorious company of fierce and abandoned men, was likely to be left alone by all, or, indeed, any of them. Whatever the lady chose to say afterwards on the matter, we know what to believe, as one thing, and one only, lies within the bounds of probability.

Thus do we see, in faith, how men and women condemn themselves out of their own mouths by their oaths; even the most beautiful queen, the most lovely princess, falling on such evil times as those described above, cannot escape any more than another, for beauty knows no law, carries no safeguard with it, but must inevitably fall under the dominion and authority of love, even of a love that knows no respect of persons.

I know of one great lady and gentleman who were married and lived together for some time. And at length the lady grew weary of her

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husband, for that he was not rich enough for her taste and she desired another, whom she married later, a very wealthy lord indeed; the husband would not, however, give her up without going to law, and as their case happened to come under the notice of the great King François, he summoned them to appear before him and give an account of themselves to him. The husband, on his side, among other things, stated that his wife was covered with birthmarks all over her body, and demanded that someone be sent to see whether he had not spoken the truth. Whereupon some women were told off to visit the lady, and they found that the husband's statement was correct. But, in spite of this, the wife chose to deny that her body was marked, and made a solemn vow at the high altar of Notre Dame de Paris to the effect that she was in no way disfigured. Whereupon the husband did the same, and swore she was; both had the Sacrament administered to them and then took oath, to the everlasting damnation of one of their souls. Some believed the one and some the other: further proof was not possible. Yet these two were not fortunate in their issue, for the children of both the one and the other were all in some way imperfect, and neither had any pleasure out of them; in that way did God punish them, as indeed He will punish all who so wickedly perjure themselves.

I could bring forward countless other examples of married women and of maidens who have sworn false oaths: but I will leave them for

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another occasion, lest I digress too far from my subject; but I may hope to be excused in this that I have said, for I have written down just what came into my mind, for fear I might forget it.

To return to our Princess Jeanne de France, I firmly believe that her husband lived with her in all intimacy, for all that she was slightly deformed, for, with her by his side, he was not strong enough to abstain, seeing that he was a man of hot passions and greatly addicted, as were all of his blood, to the pleasures of Venus. But later he wanted to regain his former love, that of Queen Anne, with her fine duchy, which tempted him sorely! Wherefore he repudiated the princess: his oath was believed and received by the Pope, who gave him dispensation, which was accepted in the Sorbonne and the Court of the Parliament of Paris. Princess Jeanne was very wise to make no scandal about it, nor attempt to invoke the aid of justice. Feeling herself capable of leading a life of chastity for the future, she withdrew from the Court and espoused the Church, rightly judging that no better bridegroom existed for her than our Lord and Saviour.

III

MADAME ANNE DE FRANCE

AFTER Madame Jeanne, we come to her sister, Anne de France, a very slim and graceful woman, and the image of her father, King Louis. It fell to

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her lot to have the care and guardianship of her brother, King Charles, and a very wise choice it proved, for she ruled him with so gentle and so wise a hand that he afterwards became one of the greatest kings of France, and was for his valour proclaimed Emperor of all the East, as we have already said. As for her own property, she governed it equally well. It is true that on account of her ambition she brought some trouble to the land, for the hatred she bore to M. d'Orléans, who later became king. But I have heard it said that at first she even bore him a certain amount of affection, not to say love; so that, as I have heard on good authority, had M. d'Orléans been willing to listen to her he would have found her well enough disposed towards him: but he aimed too high, and, judging her to be far too ambitious a princess, desired that she should take her orders from him, as first prince in the land, and the one nearest to the throne; while she desired the opposite, for she wished to hold all the reins of government in her own hands. They say that the chief difference between them,—not to mention the quarrels arising out of jealousy, love, and ambition, over which the two fell out not seldom,—arose one day when M. d'Orléans was playing tennis with the ladies of the Court, according to the custom of the time, and Madame de Beaujeu happened to be looking on. There was a dispute about a certain stroke (no uncommon thing), and Madame de Beaujeu, when appealed to, gave it against M. d'Orléans. He, ever hasty in his temper

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and suspecting whence the judgment came, murmured under his breath that he cared not who had given it against him, but if it were a man, he lied, if a woman, she was a strumpet. Some say that he contradicted her flat, but that is not so. I have the tale from the mouth of a very great lady; besides, it is hardly likely that the King's guardian would have been insulted in public in this way. When the remark was repeated to Madame (she may have half heard it) she made no outward sign of annoyance, preserving a smooth front the while; but ever after she never ceased to harass and trouble him, even going so far as to organise attempts upon his life, so that on one occasion he was constrained to leave Paris in great haste, to save himself. It was at this time that the townspeople of Orleans shut their gates against him, and he had to betake himself to Blois, whence he sought safety in Bretagne with the Duc François; it was here that he sowed the first seeds of his love affair with Madame Anne, the duke's daughter. François received him very kindly, preferring to risk the wrath of the King and bring war upon his shoulders rather than show inhospitality to the refugee—it is not everyone of whom this could be said.

It was hoped that M. d'Orléans might have been won over and induced to abandon his party, but to that he would not listen, as much for his own honour's sake as on account of his knowledge of his fair enemy's natural disposition—for she was a very deep woman and an excellent dissembler. At

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length the war between them reached such a pitch (as my grandmother, who had been brought up in the house of Madame de Beaujeu, used to recount) that M. d'Orléans was taken at Saint-Aubin du Cormier, and led a prisoner to Lusignan and afterwards to Bourges, greatly to the satisfaction of his persecutress. There he remained for a long period, until such time as King Charles VIII., having decided to make his long-wished-for journey to Naples, and not wanting to leave behind him any spark likely to set light to the ever-smouldering fire of rebellion (for all that M. d'Orléans was in prison—but even in prison such a prince as he could move the people to take up arms in his cause), and being by nature a good king, set him free, fearing lest his sister might continue to persecute him if he were left in prison, and even have him put to death. King Charles intended also to make use of him upon his journey, as indeed he did, and M. d'Orléans, being a right valiant prince, showed himself so able a commander in the sea fight near Gennes, that it was through him chiefly that the French succeeded in gaining complete possession of the kingdom of Naples.

Madame Jeanne de France, moreover, did much to bring about his freedom. How good a woman was she! Surely her conduct proved her his true wife (when later on he came to repudiate her, he was most rightly charged with base ingratitude) in that she spent her days in importuning the King, her brother, on his behalf, and also her sister, with whom she could hardly be said to be on good

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terms. For Madame Anne was vindictive, and like her father in that—nay, she resembled King Louis in everything. She was a born hypocrite and a most practised dissembler, who, for her ambition's sake, played many parts, each one more subtle than the last. The people began at length to weary of her humours, which they felt they could ill support—for all that she was a wise and virtuous woman. When the King went on his expedition to Naples she no longer held the position of Regent; it was transferred to her husband, M. de Bourbon. Not but what she was still responsible for most that went on in the King's absence, for she knew only too well how to govern her husband, and kept a strong hand over him, the more so as he was somewhat of a fool, not to say a very great fool. But the Council was hostile to her and kept a check on her ambition. She tried to exercise her prerogative by using her authority over Queen Anne, but here she got as good as she gave, as the saying is, for Queen Anne was a shrewd Bretonne, as I have already remarked, proud and even arrogant towards her equals. Madame de Bourbon soon found that it were best for her to leave the Queen, her sister-in-law, to the enjoyment of her own rank and the privileges attaching thereto, allowing her to maintain her exalted position unmolested, as it was only right she should.

I have seen letters from her that came to our house, written when she was in the height of her power, and, although I have seen many letters

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from our kings, I have never read any so courageous in manner or imperious in style as hers were, whether addressed to the proudest or the meanest in the land. She was in the habit of signing them simply with the words 'Anne de France'; sometimes, even, she wrote nothing more than the single word 'Anne'; but the noblest signature for a daughter of France is the brave surname 'de France' added to the Christian name, which a certain great personage once in my hearing recommended to Madame de Savoie when she was still quite a young girl; she took his advice, I know, for I have seen many letters from her hand signed in that way.

Madame Anne was undoubtedly a very masterful woman, anxious to have a hand in all affairs of State, and withal of a somewhat turbulent disposition. She was not above plunging all France into a state of turmoil and confusion for the sake of gratifying her overweening ambition, which, as long as she lived, she never succeeded in curbing. Even when she withdrew into a life of comparative privacy, and made as though she intended to devote herself to pleasure, she surrounded herself with a very fine court of ladies and young maidens (as my grandmother used to tell me), and managed her household in most excellent fashion, keeping a wise restraint upon all its members. But one young girl among them gave her the slip one day, and committed an indiscretion of a rather serious nature, such as certain members of her sex are prone to, the more so perhaps when an over-strict

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watch is kept upon them. Anne got to hear of it and asked her how it was that she had fallen so grievously in sin; she considered it as such, although the good lady herself was no stranger to the delights of requited love.

The sinful maiden replied that she had been constrained against her will. Thereupon her mistress drew her the comparison of a sword unsheathed, which is of no more use than another if the scabbard be unfirm and move from side to side unsteadily. In the same way was it with a woman, she continued, and proceeded to read the lesson of the unsheathed sword and the unsteady scabbard to all her maidens. There was a certain saying that was constantly on her lips, when mention happened to be made of any woman whom the speaker saw fit to praise as very wise and prudent: 'Say rather,' she would put in, 'the lady was one of the less foolish, not of the very wise; for none are that who, whether of mature or tender years, have not loved or have not entered into temptation.'

For all that, she was responsible for the upbringing of some very fine women, as I have heard my grandmother say, and her education, and the example she herself set, stood her women in good stead; there was hardly a daughter of any of the great houses of her time but learnt something from her; the house of Bourbon itself was one of the grandest in Christendom, and she added to its magnificence, for not only was she a very wealthy woman in her own right, but had amassed great

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riches during the period of her regency, so that everything at that time tended to aggrandise her house. Not only was she a generous lover of splendour, anxious to forfeit nothing of her former grandeur, but she always showed great kindness to those whom she loved, and to those who came under her protection. I shall have said enough if I add that Anne of France was a good woman, and a very witty and clever one to boot.

IV

MADAME CLAUDE DE FRANCE

WE now turn to Madame Claude de France, a good and pious lady, addicted to works of charity, and kind and gentle to all the world, who never did harm to a single member of her Court or of her kingdom. She was beloved of her father and mother, King Louise and Queen Anne, to whom she was a good and loving daughter, as indeed was clearly demonstrated when they induced the Court of the Parliament of Paris publicly to proclaim her duchess of the two finest dukedoms in Christendom, those of Milan and Bretagne, one of which came to her from her father and the other from her mother. What a heritage! The two duchies together would have made a noble kingdom in themselves.

The Queen, her mother, wished to marry her to Charles of Austria, who afterwards became em-

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peror. Had she lived she would indeed have married him, for her mother had the support of the King, her husband, in the carrying out of her desire, to say nothing of the fact that in all matters concerning the marriage of her daughters her word was law. Never did she call them other than by their names, 'My daughter Claude,' or 'my daughter Renée'; nowadays the daughters of princesses have to be given duchies and seignories, in order that they may be called by them. Had her mother lived, certainly King François never would have married the daughter, as I have already explained; for she foresaw only too well the ill-fortune that Madame Claude would suffer through her marriage, which was hardly lessened by the fact that she caught the small-pox from the King, her husband, and thus still further shortened her already short life. Madame la Regente, her mother-in-law, was a sore trial to the young princess, but she bore all she had to bear with a noble resignation, fortifying herself out of her goodly store of patience and prudent wisdom, even as we read that Marguerite, daughter of Raimond, Comte de Provence, and wife of Saint Louis the King, bore her trials and tribulations, and, wise and modest princess that she was, endured the harsh treatment of her mother-in-law, Blanche, and in the end conquered her by her very meekness. Moreover, Madame Claude brought to the King, her husband, a very fine and numerous progeny: there were three sons of the marriage: François, Henri and Charles; and four daughters: Louise, Charlotte, Magdelaine and Marguerite.

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She was, too, on the whole, well loved by the King, her husband, and well treated by him and by the whole of France, and mourned at her death, for the admirable qualities with which she was endowed.

I have read in the *Chronique d'Anjou* that after her death miracles were worked over her body, and that a certain great lady of her household, who was suffering from fever, came and made her vows to the corpse and was straightway healed of her malady.

V

MADAME RENÉE DE FRANCE

MADAME RENÉE, sister to Madame Claude, was also a good and wise princess, if ever there was one, possessed of one of the clearest intellects imaginable. She had studied a great deal, and I have heard her myself very learnedly discoursing upon some scientific topic, even astrology, upon which I one day heard her entertaining the Queen-Mother, who remarked that the wisest philosopher in the world could not have spoken better.

She had been promised to the Emperor Charles by King François (she was still very young when her parents, the King and Queen, died), but, in consequence of the war, the arrangement came to nothing, and she was given in marriage to the Duke of Ferrara, who loved her well and treated her with all honour and respect, as became a king's daughter.

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It is true they fell out for a certain period of time, on account of the husband suspecting the wife of leanings towards the Lutheran religion. It is quite possible that, knowing only too well the evil the Popes had in their time done to the King, her father, she had denied their authority and separated herself from their rule, a worse error than which she could hardly have fallen into, being a woman. I have it on good authority that she often said so herself later. But notwithstanding this, her husband never failed to respect her and show her every honour that lay in his power. Like Queen Claude, her sister, she was very fortunate in the children she bore her husband, for they were, and I can well believe it, the finest children ever seen in Italy, in spite of the fact that she herself suffered sadly from certain physical deformities.

She had two sons, the Duke of Ferrara, who is to-day one of the greatest princes in Italy, and one of the wisest and most generous to boot, and the late Cardinal d'Est, the very incarnation of goodness, magnificence, and liberality, of whom I hope later to speak again. Besides these, there were three daughters to the marriage, the most lovely ever born in Italy. Madame Anne d'Est, who became later Madame de Guise; Madame Lucrece, Duchesse d'Urbain, and Madame Eléonor, who died unmarried. The first two took the names of their grandmothers—Anne from Anne of Bretagne, on her mother's side, and Lucrece, from her father's mother, Lucrece Borgia, daughter of Pope Alexander; and very

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different women were these two grandmothers, in morals as well as in many other respects. Madame Eléanor bore the name of Queen Eléanor. The three daughters were all beautiful, and their mother took care to render them still more attractive by giving them a very excellent education, both in the sciences and the humanities, of which they made a thorough and very careful study, and often, in later years, they would put the most learned to shame by their knowledge. Their minds, therefore, were no less beautiful than their bodies. I intend to speak of these ladies in another place.

If Madame Renée was a wise, a virtuous, and a witty princess, she was also a good woman, and so well disposed towards her husband's subjects that I never heard of a single one in Ferrara who was not contented with his lot and who did not speak of the duchess in the very highest terms. The effect of her charitable works was widespread, and extended to all, but principally to the French, for there was also this about this noble lady, that she never forgot the people of her native land and, no matter how great the distance from them at which she was compelled to spend her life, she never ceased to love them. Never did François come to Ferrara in a time of necessity and appeal to her for aid without receiving a goodly sum of money in return. If he were ill, and unable to travel, she would tend him with all possible care, and when he was well again gave him money to return to France.

I have heard it said, by people who knew well what they were talking about, and by countless numbers

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of soldiers and men-at-arms who had indeed good cause to know, that at the time of the journey into Italy of M. de Guise she was the means of saving the lives of more than ten thousand poor Frenchmen, soldiers and others, who would, without her aid, have died of hunger and want; but they journeyed to Ferrara and she succoured them all with gifts of money and clothing, and with whatever she saw they needed most; there were even many noblemen of good families among them, who benefited by her charity. Not one was sent back to France without help, so I have heard, and it seems that her majordomo estimated that the visitation cost her in all more than ten thousand crowns. When the comptrollers of her household remonstrated with her for so lavish an expenditure of money, she replied: 'What am I to do? They are poor fellow-countrymen of mine, who, had God given me a beard and seen fit to make me a man, would now all have been my subjects; nay, they would have been even as it is, were it not for the evil Salic Law that holds us in its power.'

Such goodness and such charity reminds me of a certain grand lady of Canusium, a town in Apulia, who was named Birsä (by some Paulina), and who, after the great slaughter of the Romans at Cannæ, when about ten thousand soldiers who had escaped from the carnage and fled in all directions came to Canusium in the dead of night (a town at that time friendly to the Romans), succoured them in a very similar manner. She harboured them in houses of her own, and, in

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that they were weary, destitute, without arms, hungry, and covered with sores, restored and refreshed them and bade them rest from their labours, giving them food and raiment and the healing medicines of which they stood so much in need. And finally, when they had regained their strength, she sent them forth on their journey with renewed hope, giving to each one of them means to reach his home. Numbers of the fugitives came in to Canusium daily, but she never once stayed her hand, and never was one of them sent empty away if he came to her for help. Truly a wonderful charity! Surely we cannot speak too highly of this worthy lady, nor praise her extravagantly. Our Princess of Ferrara, too, is equally worthy of our meed of praise, for, but for her timely aid on the occasion I have spoken of, Italy would indeed have been, in the words of the old proverb, a very graveyard for the French.

And if she displayed her charity once, in so conspicuous a manner, she did so on every opportunity. I have heard it said by certain of her people that when she returned to France and was living in retirement in her house at Montargis while the civil wars were devastating the land, she gave shelter to countless numbers of those of the Religion who had been driven from their homes and dispossessed of their property. She devoted the remainder of her life to helping them by every means in her power.

I myself, during the second rising, joined the forces of Gascony, led by Messieurs de Terrides and Montsales, a body of some eight thousand men; and

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as we were on our way to the King we passed through Montargis, and all the chief officers went, as in duty bound, to pay their respects to Madame Renée. We saw, as far as I could judge, as many as three hundred of the Religion, or it may be even more, who, coming from all parts of the country, had taken refuge in the château. An old and very worthy steward of her household, whom I remembered having seen at Ferrara and again in France, assured me that she fed more than three hundred mouths daily.

In short, this princess was, in her goodness and charity, a true daughter of France. She was not without a certain element of pride in her disposition, and well do I remember her at the Italian Court maintaining a position worthy of her exalted rank; in appearance she was but short of stature by reason of her deformity, but she was by no means lacking in majesty of demeanour, and showed, both in her noble countenance and in her speech, that she was the daughter of a king.

I have been told by someone who has reason to know, that when the Prince de Condé was thrown into prison at Orleans, in the reign of the young King François, she arrived from Ferrara two days later. The King and all his Court went forth to meet her, and received her with the respect that was due her, but the thought of him who lay in prison so near to her troubled her sorely, and she remonstrated with the late M. de Guise, saying that whoever had advised the King to take the step of shutting up the Prince de Condé had made a sad

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mistake, and that it was no light matter thus to treat a noble prince of the blood.

But it was not M. de Guise who had advised the King, and he protested loudly, and assured her that he never sought to bring his enemies to reason but by the sword, as his parents had done before him. I know well enough who gave the King that counsel. But I have now said enough concerning this noble princess.

VI

MARGUERITE, QUEEN OF NAVARRE

WE must now say a few words about Marguerite, Queen of Navarre. She was not by birth the daughter of a king of France, nor did she bear the name of one, being neither a Valois nor an Orléans, and, as M. du Tillet says in his memoirs, the surname '*de France*' belongs only to the daughters of France who, if they happen to be born before their fathers have become king, only take that name after their accession to the throne. But for all that, this Marguerite, according to the great personages of her day, was considered to be a daughter of France, and never was she known to give her friends cause to regret having ranked her as such, for her virtues were many and of a very striking character. It is for this reason that we place her here, among our '*daughters of France*.'

She was a princess of remarkable shrewdness of

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intellect; not only was she born with exceptional powers of mind but she acquired still greater powers by the ardour with which she devoted herself to study from quite an early age. As long as she lived, she was always deeply interested in learning, and when at the height of her power liked nothing so well as to converse with the wisest in the land, the most learned in her brother's kingdom. Men of letters termed her their Mæcenæ, so highly did they honour her, and most of the books of that day were dedicated either to her brother, a very learned man, or to herself.

She was herself a writer, and one of her books, entitled *La Marguerite des Marguerites*, a very fine composition, is still to be had. Comedies and morality plays, or pastorals, as they were called at that time, came from her pen, and were played by the ladies of her Court.

Devotional verse was her favourite form of composition, for she was by nature deeply religious. The flower of the marigold she took as her emblem, a flower which resembles the sun more closely than any other, for its petals may indeed be called rays of the sun, both from their appearance and their colour. And as her device she chose the words: '*Non inferiora secutus*,' by which she implied that all her actions, thoughts, wishes, and affections were directed towards the great sun that ruled on high, even Almighty God Himself. It was on this account that she was suspected of having leanings towards the religion of Luther. But, whatever may have been her innermost feelings on the

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subject, out of the respect and love she bore her brother, the King, of whom she was extremely fond, she never openly professed to anything of the kind, for the King hated Luther and his sect, and all other sects, and used to say that they tended more to the destruction of monarchies than to the edification of souls.

For this reason King François—a wise prince if ever there was one—foreseeing the misery that differences in religion have brought to so many lands, hated all sects, as he called them, and was ever ready to burn a heretic. But at the same time he did not refrain from helping the Protestant princes of Germany in their struggle against the Emperor; but these great kings hold it their privilege to do as they please in all things!

A friend, whose information I have always held trustworthy, told me that M. le Connétable de Montmorency, when he was at the height of his favour with the King, discoursing with his Majesty one day, did not scruple to tell him that if he really wished to exterminate the heretics he must begin with his own Court and those most closely related to himself, and even went so far as to mention the name of his sister. Whereupon the King replied: 'We will not speak of that, for she loves me far too well. My belief will always be hers, and never, I am sure, would she embrace a religion which might be prejudicial to my estate.'

She never cared for the Constable after that, and left no stone unturned in her efforts to bring him into disfavour and to get him banished from the

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Court. The tale is told of how, on the day when Madame la Princesse de Navarre, her daughter, was married to the Duc de Cleves at Chastelleraut, and the young bride was about to set forth to church, it was found that she was so loaded with jewels and precious stones, and her robe of cloth of silver and gold was so heavy for her, that, poor child, she could not walk. The King bade the Constable take and carry his little niece to church, a sight at which all the Court stared in amazement, thinking that the royal burden might well have been given to another, and that it was in no way a fitting one for a mere Constable. But the Queen of Navarre, ever outwardly gracious, only said: 'So he who would ruin me with the King, my brother, now serves to carry my little daughter to church.'

It is said that the Constable himself was very averse to obeying the King's command, and unwilling to present so strange a spectacle in the eyes of all the Court; he was heard to mutter: 'Farewell now to my former favour with the King, for I shall feel it no more.' Nor did he; for after the wedding feast he was given his *congé*, and left the Court immediately. My brother was at that time a page at Court and he witnessed the whole scene, of which he gave me a very vivid description, the more so as he was blessed with an excellent memory. I may have digressed too far from my subject—but let it pass, for the incident came to my mind and I could not refrain from setting it down.

To return again to the subject of the Queen's learning, I can only say that it was such that any

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ambassadors who had the honour of conversing with her would go away enchanted, and carry back to their own countries wonderful reports of her wisdom. She used to assist her brother very materially in the affairs of State, for often, when he was sore pressed, ambassadors would, after having made their bow to the King, pass on to her and lay their actual business before her. She was an adept in holding them in conversation the while she made up her mind upon the question that had been put to her, and very clever too in drawing out an ambassador and inducing him to say more than he perhaps intended. The King himself often spoke of the able way in which she assisted him, and how much she took off his hands.

At the time when the King was so ill in Spain, where he was being kept in confinement, she, armed with the Emperor's safe-conduct, went to visit him, as only a kind sister and a good friend would. She found her brother in so pitiable a condition that she felt that had she not come he would have died, for she knew him better and could judge of his appearance more accurately than any physician. The treatment ordered by her completely restored him. The King often used to say himself that but for her he would have died—and to the end of his life he felt grateful to her for coming. They both loved each other very dearly, and she, indeed, was so fond of him that when she first heard of his illness, she cried out: 'Whoever shall come to my door to announce the recovery of the King, my brother, even if he be weary and worn, mud-

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besplashed and hungry, I will fall on his neck and embrace him, as though he were one of the noblest princes of France; and if he lack a bed, and can find nowhere to lay his head in his weariness, I will give him my own and lie down myself on the hard ground, in gratitude for the good news.'

When she heard of her brother's death, her grief was so poignant, and her regrets so bitter, that it seemed as if she would never cease lamenting her loss. I have heard it said that on this occasion, when she was in Spain, she spoke her mind so plainly to the Emperor on the subject of the ill-treatment that her brother had received at his hands that he was struck dumb in amazement. She charged him with ingratitude and treason (referring to Flanders); and, further, accused him of hardness of heart, in that he had used so great and so good a king so very ill, adding that his death would assuredly not go unavenged, for he had children who, when they grew up, would one day take signal vengeance on him for his treatment of their father.

These words, uttered so courageously, and emphasised with such righteous anger, were not without their effect upon the Emperor, and caused him to think over what he had done.

And if the Queen spoke in this way to the Emperor, she spoke even more strongly to those of his Council with whom she had audience; she knew well how to address a body of men such as the Spanish councillors, and spoke with a grace and charm with which she was well endowed. She succeeded so well with them that she left the

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impression of an agreeable woman rather than that of an angry one; we must remember that she was still young, and very beautiful, and a widow in her prime; small wonder that she moved the Council, however hard and cruel its members. In the end she persuaded them to see the matter entirely in her own light and came to be held in high esteem by the Emperor and all his Court. But at the same time, as the term allotted in her safe-conduct was drawing to an end, she began to suspect that the Emperor intended to hold her under arrest as soon as it expired, and therefore, brave woman that she was, she completed arrangements in eight days that would ordinarily have taken fifteen, and generally bestirred herself, to such good effect that she reached the French frontier on the evening of the day on which the terms of her passport ceased to hold good. Thus did she cheat his Majesty of his prey, for he would most certainly have detained her had she remained in his country a day longer. She wrote many letters to him after that, and endeavoured to gain redress, and further, when he passed through France, she made war upon him. I have all this from Madame le Seneschale, my grandmother, who was one of her ladies-in-waiting at this time.

During the imprisonment of the King, her brother, she was of great assistance to her mother, the Regent, helping her to keep on good terms with the young princes and to win over the nobility to her side; her manner was so engaging that she

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had little difficulty in captivating all with whom she came into contact.

In short, she was a princess worthy of a great empire, and a good woman, gentle in her manner and gracious, charitable to all who came to her for help. When she died there was not a single being who did not mourn for her.

Numbers of epitaphs were written in her honour, some in Greek, some in Latin, some in French, and some in Italian, so that there is still in existence a very fine book composed entirely of epitaphs written on the death of Queen Marguerite of Navarre.

The Queen often used to say, whenever she heard anyone discoursing on death and on the everlasting happiness to come: 'All you say is true, but we have to stay so long dead under the earth before we gain our happiness!' I have heard my mother and my grandmother say (they were both ladies-in-waiting to the Queen) that when, being on the point of death, she was told that her end was near, she found it very hard to believe, and straightway repeated the words I have quoted above, adding that she was not so old but that she had hoped to live for many years to come; she was but fifty-two or three at the time of her death.

She was born beneath the tenth degree of the planet Equarius, Saturn separating himself from Venus in aspect quartile, on the 10th of April 1492, at ten o'clock in the evening in the château of Angoulême, and conceived in the year 1491, ten hours, seventeen minutes before midday, on the

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11th of July. Worthy astrologers made their prognostications on these details. She died at Béarn, in the château d'Odos, in the month of December of the year 1549. We can calculate her age at the time of her death from this. She was older than the King, her brother, who was born at Cognac, on the 12th of September, at nine o'clock in the evening, in the year 1494, beneath the twenty-first degree of Gemini, and conceived in the year 1493, on the 10th of December, at ten o'clock in the morning. He became king on the 11th of January 1514, and died in 1547.

The Queen contracted the disease that proved fatal while watching a comet that appeared at the time of the death of Pope Paul III. As she stood regarding it, her mouth became suddenly drawn to one side, and her physician, M. d'Escuranis, noticing this, took her away immediately and made her lie down and be treated by him. She died within eight days of her seizure. I am in a position to assert, contrary to the opinion of many, that she died a good Catholic. I was a little boy at her Court at the time, with my mother and grandmother, and they never saw reason to believe that she was other than a devout member of the Catholic Church. After her brother's death she retired into a convent in Angoumois, called Tusson, and remained there during a whole summer, and was often seen taking divine service for the Lady Abbess and singing with the nuns at Vespers and Mass.

There is a tale told of how one of her maidens,

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of whom she was very fond, was about to die, and Queen Marguerite came to her bedside, saying that she wished to be present at her death. As long as the poor girl still breathed, the Queen never stirred, but stood staring at her face, from which she never lifted her eyes until life became extinct. One of her more intimate ladies asked her in what way she had been edified by the sight of a poor creature's last struggles with death. She replied that, since she had heard so much from the learned doctors of how the soul leaves the body at the very moment when death enters it, she wished to find out whether one felt a wind, or heard a noise of any kind, at that moment; adding that she had noticed nothing whatever. She said too that when, one day, she had asked the doctors the reason why the dying swan sang a song, they had told her that it was for love of the spirit striving to pass out through the long white neck; and in a like manner, said she, she had desired to see or feel or to hear the soul of the dying maiden as it passed out into the free air. Were it not that she was fixed in her faith she would not know what to think of this so-called separating of the soul from the body, but, in obedience to her God and the Church, she laid aside her curiosity, believing that, though she saw it not, the maiden's soul must certainly have passed up to heaven when she died, for she had in life been a devout spirit, with the name of God ever on her lips.

In her leisure moments she wrote a book, entitled *Les Nouvelles de la Reine de Navarre*, in which

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are to be found such fine phrases and beautiful sentences, and the whole of which is written in so fluent and charming a style that I have heard it said that the Queen-Mother and Madame de Savoie, in their youth, aspired to writing *Nouvelles* themselves, in imitation of the Queen of Navarre (for they knew at the time that she was writing her book)—when they saw the *Nouvelles* of the Queen of Navarre they threw their own into the fire, convinced that they had no place whatever by the side of so excellent a composition. A great loss to the world, however, it doubtless was, for they were two clever and witty women, who could have had nothing but agreeable news to tell us, and good tales to relate.

Queen Marguerite composed the chief part of her *Nouvelles* in her litter as she went about the country, for when she was at home she had other things to occupy her time. My grandmother has told me this: she accompanied her in her litter wherever she went, as her lady-in-waiting, and carried the desk on which she wrote, or even wrote herself to the Queen's dictation. Queen Marguerite was, besides, a most charming writer of mottoes, whether in French or in Latin or in any other language that she chose; on the beds and on the tapestries in our house there are to be found many mottoes that owe their origin to her.

I have said enough about her for the time; I shall speak of her again in another place.

CHARLOTTE, LOUISE, MAGDELAINE

VII

MESDAMES CHARLOTTE, LOUISE, AND MAGDELAINE DE FRANCE

I HAVE already said that Madame Claude was very fortunate in her offspring, and brought forth a noble progeny of sons and daughters. Of her daughters, an untimely death prevented Mesdames Charlotte and Louise from fulfilling the promise shown so markedly in their youth; had they been permitted to live their full term of years, they would have in no way fallen short of other fair and wise princesses born to France. Madame Louise had been promised in marriage to the Emperor Charles, but she died before the union could be solemnised. The wind as often nips the rosebud as it scatters the full-blown rose. Youth cut off in its prime is more to be lamented a hundred times than old age, for the loss to the world may be so much greater in the former case; in the latter the loss can at least be gauged. Madame Magdelaine de France had not much longer to live than her sisters; for not long after she had become Queen, a thing she had longed for all her life, so noble were her ambitions, than she too succumbed to the ravages of death.

She was married to the King of Scotland; and when they tried to dissuade her from the union—not, indeed, because the prince was not worthy of her, for he was a brave and handsome man, but

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because, when married to him, she would be condemned to spend her days in a barbarous and uncivilised land—she replied: ‘At least, for as long as I live, I shall be Queen; and that I have ever longed to be.’ But when she came to live in Scotland she found the climate every whit as bad as her friends and advisers had made it out to be—very different from that of the pleasant land of France. She never showed signs of having regretted her action, however, beyond saying, occasionally: ‘Alas! I wished to be a queen!’ striving to conceal her melancholy, which she looked upon as the fruit of her ambition, under a goodly canopy of patience. M. de Ronsard told me of this himself, for he accompanied her into Scotland, having gained permission from M. d’Orléans to go there and see something of the world.

Soon after this she died, bitterly mourned by the King and the whole country, for she had been a very good queen, and greatly loved by her people.

VIII

MADAME MARGUERITE DE FRANCE

MADAME MARGUERITE DE FRANCE, later the Duchess of Savoy, was so wise and virtuous, and so learned in every branch of knowledge, that she was known as the Minerva or Pallas Athene of France. She chose for her motto the words: ‘*Rerum Sapientia custos*,’ and as her device an olive branch surrounded

MADAME MARGUERITE DE FRANCE

by two serpents, intertwined, signifying that everyone was, or ought to be, 'regulated' by knowledge, of which she herself had so goodly a store. Men honoured her as the goddess and patron of learning; the splendid collection of books that still exists, all written for and dedicated to her, bears witness to this, to say nothing of the fact that they contain many references to her knowledge, and high praise of her scholarship.

She was proud and haughty in her bearing. King Henri once wanted to marry her to the late M. de Vendôme, one of the first princes of the blood, but she gave answer that she would never consent to marry a subject of the King, her brother. That is the reason why she remained so long single, until the day came when peace was made between the two Christian and Catholic kings, and she espoused M. de Savoie, for whom she had for some long time had an affection, from the time of King François in fact, and his meeting at Nice with Pope Paul III. when the Queen of Navarre, in obedience to the King, went to see the late M. de Savoie, the father, at his château at Nice, taking her niece with her. She pleased the old man well and he thought her a very suitable wife for his son. While the long war dragged on nothing more was done, and not until peace was proclaimed was the marriage consummated. It cost France a great deal, for King Henri so loved his sister, and was so anxious to see her settled, that he refused no terms that were offered him, but consented that France should surrender in a single hour all the conquests she had

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made in Piedmont and Savoy during the last thirty years. France herself and Piedmont were for the most part ill pleased at the peace, complaining that the terms were far too exacting. Some thought it strange, others judged it as almost incredible, and even foreigners laughed at us for our complacence; but those who loved their country best wept for her, even as the Piedmontese wept when they heard they were to be handed back again to their former masters—if, that is to say, it is right to term the Dukes of Savoy lords of Piedmont, inasmuch as it once belonged by right to the Kings of France.

As for the soldiers and companions-at-arms, who had grown accustomed to their quarters in Piedmont and the delights of the climate of that country, we need hardly ask what they said of the matter, how they cried out against so iniquitous a peace, as in their wrath they termed it. Some exclaimed: 'To think that we should have to give up so many fine acres for the sake of providing a woman with a husband!' Others: 'Why, certainly, we ought to do as much for Minerva, goddess of chastity!' And others again: 'It were better if she kept her virginity for five and forty years than lose it to the ruin of France!'

In short, were I to recount all the abuse in which these men indulged in their disappointment, I should never have done, for I assure you they stopped at nothing in their indignation and self-pity.

Had they, in these times, been of so disorderly and mutinous a disposition as they were later, in

MADAME MARGUERITE DE FRANCE

the time of our civil wars, they would undoubtedly have taken up arms again and seized the strongholds of the district and we should have had great difficulty in driving them out. But then, too, they had in that day to do with M. le Maréchal de Brissac, a general who knew how to make himself feared and respected if ever one did. The poor fellows were compelled to take their leave of Piedmont, and, with wailing and gnashing of teeth, some returned to their homes in France, that they had not seen for thirty years; others, more desperate characters, took service under the King of Spain, who was at war with the Grand Turk; and more than fifteen hundred were slain in battle, fighting valiantly to the last.

I have heard it said that if only Piedmont had been left to us, and the rest given up, the marriage would have been very popular; Piedmont would have been useful as a battlefield for the more warlike spirits among us, who might have devoted their energies to conquests in that direction, rather than in rising up against their brethren and involving their country in civil war. It seems natural to the French to devote themselves to the warlike Mars, and to hate idleness, leisure, and peace. But it was unfortunate for France to have to purchase peace on these terms. We cannot blame Madame de Savoie, who in truth never desired anything less than the ruin of her native land, and never has shown herself ungrateful for the benefits received at the hands of her people. As long as she lived she never ceased to urge M. de Savoie, her husband, to keep the

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peace scrupulously and not depart from the terms therein laid down. He was at heart a Spaniard, and a Spaniard he remained to the end of his life, having but little real sympathy with France, as he showed soon enough after the death of his wife. It was he who secretly stirred up Marshal Bellegarde, and induced him to take up arms against the King. His Highness did a great wrong to France in doing this, and was certainly unmindful of all the benefits he had received at the hands of the King of France, especially the late King Henri III., from whom he received so much in return for Poland.

Many competent judges consider that had Madame de Savoie lived, she would have prevented this blow from falling on her countrymen, so deeply did she always consider herself to be indebted to the land of her birth. I have heard it said that had she lived, and seen for herself the treachery of Marshal Bellegarde, she would have had him strangled; the late King used to say so himself, and firmly believed that she would. He was so bitterly disgusted at the whole affair that on the day he heard of it he refused to take the Sacrament. He always said that had his aunt lived it would never have happened: her goodness must have left a strong impression upon the King, as, indeed, it did upon the world.

What is more—and this I have on excellent authority—had she not been such as I have described, the King and his Council would hardly have enriched her as they did, nor, for that matter,

MADAME MARGUERITE DE FRANCE

would they have benefited in return, for she never denied France or the French anything. No Frenchman ever had occasion to complain that she had not helped him when he had appealed to her in his time of need; from her he had always obtained money for his journeys, money to help him on his way, wherever he purposed to travel. Often too she gave her money before it was asked for; and I can say as much as this for certain, for Madame la Comtesse de Poncalier, sister to M. de Raitz, a great favourite with Madame Marguerite and one of her ladies-in-waiting, having one day invited me to take supper in her room, presented me with a purse, containing five hundred crowns, from her mistress: she offered it to me for the love she bore to Madame de Dampierre, my aunt, and the love she had borne to my mother. But I swear I never touched a penny of the money, for I had enough of my own to take me to the Court and would rather have gone the whole distance on foot than venture to importune so fair and generous a princess. The same could not be said of all, however, for I know myself of many who took whatever she chose to give them.

One of her stewards once told me that she set aside a third of her income every year for the poor French who came her way—so good a Frenchwoman was she! None can complain of the good she brought to France; she knew no joy equal to the joy she experienced when she heard good news of her country, nor any sadness equal to that with which she received bad news.

When the first wars broke out she grieved so

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bitterly over the misery and bloodshed that she came near to death ; and when peace was made, and she came to Lyons to see the King and the Queen-Mother, her joy was as great as their own, and she even angered several Huguenots by her rejoicings, writing and begging them to forget the past and lay down their arms for the future. The Huguenots held her in great honour and trusted in her, in spite of the fact that she had never done anything for them in her life ; but for her the late Admiral might have been enjoying her possessions in Savoy.

So great was the love borne her by her husband's people that, when she died, there was such weeping and wailing throughout the land that it seemed as though it would never cease ; the proudest joined with the humblest in shedding tears for their dear mistress. She never neglected an opportunity of petitioning her husband on behalf of any who had offended him, or stood in need of his forgiveness or his favour ; in many cases she succeeded, where others would have failed, in winning him over to a gentler frame of mind. All looked upon her as their patron saint.

In short, she was goodness personified, and, as I have already said, charitable, liberal, wise, and virtuous ; accessible to all, kindly towards all who came before her, especially to her own people. When they went to make their bow to her she received them so graciously as even to put them to shame ; distinguished nobles she often honoured to the extent of refusing to talk with them unless

ELIZABETH AND CLAUDE

they covered their heads. I speak from experience for, one day, when I was talking to her, she did me this honour, and urged me so that I could not but say to her: 'Madame, I hope I may not forget I am a Frenchman, nor forget who you are, and what is due to your position, when you do me so great an honour.' Never would she talk to anyone sitting down; either she used to stand up herself or bid them be seated by her side, before she entered into any conversation.

Enough can never be said of this princess; adequately to recount her many charms and virtues needs an abler pen than mine. Now I shall keep silent until another time, and content myself with speaking of the daughters of our King Henri—Madame Elizabeth and Madame Claude de France.

IX

MADAME ELIZABETH AND MADAME CLAUDE DE FRANCE

I WILL begin with King Henri's eldest daughter, Madame Elizabeth, or rather, as I ought to call her, 'La belle Elizabeth du Monde,' for her rare virtues and numerous charms and graces. She it was who became Queen of Spain, and was so dearly loved and honoured by all her people in her lifetime, and after her death so very bitterly regretted, as I have already said in the short account I have given of her. I shall not for the present say more about her, but

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content myself with speaking of her sister, King Henri's second daughter, who was Madame Claude de France (she was called after her grandmother), Duchess of Lorraine, and a fair, wise, virtuous, kind, and gracious princess. All who knew her at Court said that she resembled her mother and her aunt in many ways; in fact, some held her to be their very image. She had a countenance so gay and cheerful that all who looked could not but be pleased at it: in beauty she resembled her mother, and in learning and goodness, her aunt; her people of Lorraine never spoke any ill of her, or heard any as long as she lived, as I judged for myself when I was in that country; and when she died, the whole land was plunged in grief, and M. de Lorraine mourned her so bitterly that he remained a widower for her sake, although still a young man, and never seemed to want to marry again, saying that he would never find another wife in any way her equal; when such a one was found, he added, he would marry her.

She brought him a fine family, and died in child-bed, through the fault, some say, of a drunken midwife in whom she had always had the greatest confidence.

The news of her death was brought to Rheims at the time of the King's coronation, and the whole Court was thrown into mourning and everyone regretted her loss, for her kindness was universal, and she did good to all who came in her path.

The last time she came to Court the King, her brother, presented her with all the fines that

MADAME DIANE DE FRANCE

came to the treasury from Guienne; fines sometimes took the place of confiscation of property, and were made so heavy that very often they were worth even more than confiscation itself.

Madame de Dampierre once asked her for one of the fines, in my hearing, and Madame Claude replied: 'Madame de Dampierre, I give it you with pleasure, for I have not accepted the King's gift for myself at all; he offered it to me of his own free will. I have no wish to ruin France, for I am French myself and love all those who are as I am. The French will have more consideration from me than from any other to whom the King might have presented his gift. Those who want of me, and ask, shall receive.'

And it was true, for all who had to do with her never met with anything but kindness and courtesy.

In short, she was a true daughter of France, both in generosity and in spirit, and in a certain clearness of mind which she possessed; she was always of great assistance to her husband in the government of his dominions.

X

MADAME DIANE DE FRANCE

I MUST not forget Madame Diane de France, who, although she was not a natural child, may still be ranked among the daughters of France, inasmuch

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as King Henri, her father, took care to acknowledge her, and render her legitimate, and endow her as richly as he would a daughter born in lawful wedlock. He gave her the duchy of Chastelleraut, which he took from her later, giving her that of Angoulême in return; she is known to this day as the Duchesse d'Angoulême. She has enjoyed all the privileges that other daughters of France have enjoyed, even that of participating in the affairs of the kings, her brothers, and even of King Charles and King Henri III.; I have seen her myself at their councils, as though she were their own sister; certainly they all loved her as a sister. She closely resembled King Henri, her father, both in features and in character, and loved all the sports and pastimes that he loved—such as hunting, riding, and fencing. I do not think it possible for any woman to sit a horse more gracefully than she did.

I have heard it said how once, when the little King Charles VIII. was in his kingdom of Naples, Madame la Princesse de Melfe came to make her bow to him and took occasion to present to him her daughter, who came, beautiful as an angel, mounted on a splendid charger, which she managed as dexterously as the most practised riding-master. The King and all his Court were lost in amazement at the sight of such great beauty on horseback; her horsemanship did indeed do honour to her sex.

All who ever saw Madame d'Angoulême on horseback were enchanted at the sight; her frame

MADAME DIANE DE FRANCE

was so well knit and her poise so graceful that she could truthfully be likened to Camilla, that fair Queen of the Volsci. Her face and figure were both very fine, and there were few at Court to rival her in beauty. Although her particular style of loveliness was one admirably adapted to the exercise of horsemanship, it must in no way be supposed that she ever overstepped the bounds of modesty or in any way neglected those observances which every woman owes to her sex. The same could hardly be said of the princess, her mother, for she did occasionally err on the side of boldness and indifference to public opinion.

I remember once M. le Maréchal d'Amville, her brother-in-law, presented her with a very fine horse, to which he had given the name *Le Dottor*; it was a horse with a very gentle action, and so quiet a way of taking the road that no parson on his way to church could have been more sedate—hence the name chosen by the Marshal. I can see Madame Diane to this day, riding on a little ahead, to the admiration of all the Court. It was her custom to adopt a very handsome riding dress, and she never forgot to deck her hat with gay plumes, and to wear it *à la Guelph*. What a pity it is that old age comes to spoil a woman's beauty and deprive her of her manifold charms; before she died, Madame Diane had to give up all the outdoor exercises in which she so delighted, and which so well became her, for nothing did she ever do that was lacking in grace. Like her father, the King, she took a delight in all forms of

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sport and was, moreover, an excellent dancer of every kind of dance, whether grave, stately, or gay.

She could sing well, and played the lute very prettily, as well as other instruments. In short, in this, as in everything, she was her father's daughter. She was never known to give displeasure to any. Noble-hearted and generous-minded, she made an excellent wife to both her husbands, and loved and honoured them as a true wife should.

She was first married to the Duc de Castro, of the house of Farneze, who was slain at the storming of Hesdin, and next to M. de Montmorency, who did not at first accede to the union, for he had pledged his troth to the beautiful Mademoiselle de Pienne, one of the Queen's maidens. But his father threatened to disinherit him if he did not do as he was told, and, in fear of his wrath, de Montmorency broke with Mademoiselle de Pienne and married Madame Diane. Nor had he cause to regret his choice, notwithstanding the fact that the said Pienne was a daughter of one of the most ancient houses of France, and herself one of the fairest, wisest, and most virtuous maidens of the Court. Madame loved her well, and continued to love her after her marriage, oblivious of her husband's earlier love for her. Jealousy formed no part of her nature; she knew, too, how to control herself and never had cause to regret a deed done in a moment of weakness. The kings, her brothers, and Monsieur himself, were very fond of her, as

MADAME DIANE DE FRANCE

were the queens and duchesses, her sisters, for she never at any time caused them a blush of shame. King Charles loved her especially, because she always accompanied him on his hunting expeditions and was his cheerful companion in every outdoor exercise.

King Henri loved her because he knew how fondly she loved him. When the war was at its height, after the death of M. de Guise, she heard that her brother, the King, was in dire straits, and immediately set out in a diligence from her *maison de l'Isle-Adam*, and, braving every risk, for her steps were dogged all along the road, took him a sum of fifty thousand crowns which she had saved out of her income, and which at this juncture were more than acceptable to the King—I believe they are still owing. The King was so grateful for what she had done that, had he lived, he would certainly have amply rewarded her for having so nobly aided him in his extremity. But since his death she has no heart for anything, but seems to mourn him all day long, and think out schemes of vengeance which, had she but the power, she would carry out against those who killed him. Our present King has never been able to reconcile her with Madame de Montpensier. She hates her like the plague for the share she had in her brother's death, and even went so far one day as to insult her in the presence of Madame, the King's sister, saying to her that there was not an honest subject in the King's realm, and that it was she who was the cause of his being King at all,

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by the murder of the late unhappy King, her brother.

I hope to speak of Madame Diane on another occasion, wherefore I shall now keep silent.

XI

MADAME ISABELLE DE FRANCE

THE last daughter of France, of whom we have still to speak, is the little Madame Isabelle de France, daughter of the late King Charles IX., of whom it may be said that she was in truth one of nature's miracles, for, although but eight years old when she died, she had already said some very wonderful, nay, almost incredible, things.

This little princess was well aware that she was descended from the two noblest houses in Christendom, the house of France and the house of Austria, and could discourse upon the two families as ably as any lawyer, having, even at that early age, made it her business to learn the names of her fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, and so on, and the most noteworthy facts about each.

Once, when she was ill, the King, her uncle, let three days pass without going to see her; on the fourth day he went, and as soon as she saw him coming in at the door she feigned sleep and turned towards the wall; and, although the King called her three times, she pretended not to hear, until

MADAME ISABELLE DE FRANCE

Madame de Crissé, her governess (and my aunt), made her turn round to look at the King; but even then she was very cold in her manner and did not address more than two words to him. When he had gone, her governess scolded her and asked her why she had behaved in this way. She replied: 'How could I possibly do otherwise, my good woman? Here have I been ill in bed three days and he has never once been to see me, nor even sent anyone to inquire after me, his niece, and the daughter of his eldest brother, of whom he certainly has no reason to be ashamed!'

Young as she was, she knew very well how to maintain her dignity. When a courtier went to make a bow to her, she had a way of graciously extending her hand for the kiss which reminded one of the Queen, her mother; she used to sit very upright in her chair and make inquiries concerning any who were especial favourites of the King, her father.

In short, she had the tenderest heart and the brightest intelligence that were ever found in one so young. Child though she was, she put many to shame who were far older than she; men said she would not live, and that she must inevitably die young, as indeed she did, before she was eight years old. She may be likened to fine fruit that has come too soon to maturity. At the same time, some have held other opinions about her death, but I need not go into them here; the more sober party at Court did not share them.

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I have now said enough on the subject of these noble daughters of France, of whom I will take farewell until another time, when I hope again to say a few words concerning their virtues and noble qualities.

CHAPTER VII

THE TWO JEANNES, QUEENS OF JERUSALEM, SICILY, AND NAPLES

I

QUEEN JEANNE

LEAVING my discourse upon the noble daughters of the house of France, I now turn to Queen Jeanne I., granddaughter of King Robert, who was descended from brave King Charles I., Duc d'Anjou and King of Naples, and brother to the good Saint Louis. I have often wondered that, of all the famous writers of her day, among whom were Boccaccio and Petrarch, none came forward to write about this noble lady. True, the writer of the 'History of Naples' has spoken at great length about her, nay, perhaps even at too great length, for he has amused himself with saying nothing but ill concerning her, according to the usual custom of Italian historians, who have always been niggards in their praise of us French. This is what he says: that she was a lady devoted to love and intrigue.

To quote his own words: 'Her first husband was Andreasse, her second cousin; but, after they had ruled their kingdom together for some time, she grew weary of him, and when they were both on a

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visit to the town of Aversa she sent for him one night, under pretext of wishing to speak to him on the subject of some fresh news that had reached her. On his way to her room he was taken, at her request, and hanged to a stake till he was dead. Some say that she put an end to him because, although a young man, and very personable, yet, on account of her own insatiable appetites, he did not satisfy the desires of his wife. And others tell how the lady was one day working at a long gold cord, and Andreasse asked her why she was making it. With a smile she told him that she was making it to hang him by. She held him of so slight account that she did not scruple to use such words to him, and Andreasse, good, simple man that he was, took no heed of them either, although in the end he suffered enough at her hand, poor man. She did go so far as to excuse herself concerning her conduct to King Louis of Hungary, her husband's brother, but Louis did no more than write to her the following letter:—

“Your previous disorderly life, the fact that you have taken care to keep the government of your kingdom in your own hands, the absence of any signs of vengeance taken on those who murdered your husband, your speedy remarriage, and the excuses you have seen fit to make to me, are one and all clear proofs that you were yourself an accomplice in the death of your husband.” Immediately after the murder she married one of her cousins, a son of the Prince of Tarento, of whom she had long been very fond, and with whom she behaved well

QUEEN JEANNE I.

and honourably. She lived with him very amicably for three years, but at the end of that period he died, worn out by her excessive demands upon him in the service of the goddess Venus.

‘She then married, for the third time, one Jacques, the Infante of Majorca, who was held at that time to be the most well-favoured and the wisest young man in the island, but for all that she did not wish him to adopt the title of King, but simply that of Duke of Calabria; for she wished to rule alone and in her own right, sharing her authority with none. To be sure, she did it ably enough, as the poor husband learned to his cost, for, hearing that he had taken to himself another wife, she immediately had his head cut off, and in this way her third husband came to an untimely end.

‘For her fourth husband she chose Otho of Brunswick, of the Saxon race, and a great soldier. I have heard it said that it was for this reason that the Emperor Charles changed his mind concerning a certain expedition into Naples that he had originally ordered Otho to undertake, fearing that if the Duke of Brunswick found himself at the head of a powerful army of Germans he might manufacture some claim to the kingdom of Naples, and cause a disturbance there, if he did no more.

‘Now it so happened that after some time King Louis of Hungary, urged on by his subjects to avenge the death of his brother, sent a large army against this fair Queen, led by Charles de Durazzo; and, in the battle that followed, Otho, the Queen’s husband, gave a wonderful exhibition of

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his courage and skill in the use of arms; his horse was wounded and, later, shot beneath him and he was himself led a prisoner to General Charles.

‘The Queen, seeing that things seemed to be going against her, and knowing that she had no further means of obtaining help, gave up hope and begged Charles to grant her an interview. Charles complied by coming himself to the garden of her castle, where she made him a deep bow, such as is due from vanquished to victor (poor lady, it must have broken her heart!), and addressed him in the following terms:—“I have until this hour always considered you in the light of a son; but now, since so it has pleased God, I must look upon you as my lord. Wherefore I place my honour and that of my husband in your hands.” To which Charles gave answer: “I have always loved you as a mother. My actions in the future shall always be judged by the touchstone of your husband’s honour and your own, which I hold in my hands.” Whereupon the Queen gave herself up to him. She was conveyed away from there to another place, accompanied by a strong escort, and the news of her capture and the conquest of her kingdom was communicated to the King. When the latter was asked what he wished done with the Queen’s person, he sent two of his barons to Charles to congratulate him on his victory, and told him that the Queen was to be treated in the same way as she had herself, in former years, treated her husband, Andreasse: in due course was she hanged by the neck, as he had been, and on gallows erected on the

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very spot where he had suffered there was she made to suffer. Her body was afterwards taken to the Church of Saint Claire, at Naples, and after three days duly interred. The two barons stayed to see the execution and then carried the news back to Hungary.

‘Madame Marie, the Queen’s second sister, a shameless woman, suffered death by beheading at the hands of the victors shortly after; she had been an accomplice in the death of Andreasse. This Marie was the woman who was the wife of Robert d’Artois and the mistress of Boccaccio, the great writer who flourished at this time.’

So much for the historian of Naples. When he had said all he could think of in defamation of the Queen’s good character, he could not refrain from adding: ‘Such was Queen Jeanne, the first of the name, and King Robert’s granddaughter, and such the end she came to; she was highly esteemed for her prudence and her valour by many writers, and warmly praised by the brothers Baldus and Angelus, two famous law doctors, in one of their treatises.’

I have heard men speak of this Queen, at Naples and elsewhere, in very different terms from those employed by this lying author. As for reproaching her for having had four husbands, and charging her with immodesty and licentiousness, it is ridiculous, for marriage is a good and holy institution, ordained by God for the benefit of His people, and surely it were better for her to marry than to prostitute her body and abandon herself to one lover after another. We have in our own time

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seen so many of our queens, our princesses, and our great ladies, whether maidens or widows, making love à *outrance*, as we say, and playing the wanton with all who happened to take their fancy, rather than marrying and settling down; they seem, in fact, to have avoided the holy state of matrimony in order the more easily to pursue a life of profligacy. But Queen Jeanne can hardly be accused of this, for at least it was only with husbands that she sought relief from her burning passions.

As for Andreasse, whom she put to death, men say he was a drunkard, and a very malicious and dangerous man, who assumed the character of simpleton, as some clever men can, the more easily to accomplish the object he had in view—namely, that of putting his wife to death and reigning in her stead. But she forestalled him in his evil designs and struck the first blow; and surely, in a matter of life and death, it is better to forestall than to be forestalled—we might call it one of nature's privileges.

As for the death of her cousin, the son of the Prince of Tarento, who died worn out by his excesses, she really had nothing to do with that, for no one can keep a man from getting drunk in his own liquor; nor can we blame the wine for going to the drinker's head. I have little doubt that the great beauty of this fair Queen, her grace, dignity, charm, and attractiveness, all combined to lead this young man on to attempt more than he was able to achieve; but the effort surely came from him, and not from her. And, after all, how could man die

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better than serving his lady and his queen, showing her all the love he bore for her, sparing no trouble, begrudging no strength, if he could but content her and give her satisfaction and relief?

At the time of the furious assault on the camp of Charlemagne, we read how a certain lord was slain in his tent, in the arms of his mistress, with whom he had lain all that night. One and all considered him a fortunate man to have died so delightful a death. And how can we consider Queen Jeanne's husband other than happy in dying to save his cousin and his wife?

In regard to her third husband, the Infante of Majorca, whose head she cut off for being unfaithful to her marriage-bed, and leaving her for the embraces of another (although some say that even he died a natural death; but I pass that over), was she not justified in punishing adultery thus severely? He had no more right to transgress the marriage law than she had; in God's eyes the law is as binding to the husband as to the wife. And further, finding him in the arms of another, what was she to do? I appeal to the spirit of jealousy that is in us all. Moreover, had he been absolute King himself, he would assuredly have had her put to death; and that is why she did well to make him suffer for his transgression, for otherwise she would have been made to suffer herself.

In short, whatever her reasons, and whoever is the judge of them, he would indeed have a poor idea of justice who could fail to condemn this wretched man for having broken faith with the

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most beautiful queen of her day, to go and live with one who was not worthy to tie the latchet of her shoe. Poor fool that he was! As well might he, finding himself thirsty, have left the clear fountain to go and drink out of a muddy pool. I maintain then, once and for all, that, in spite of all that has been said, the man met with a just death, according to his deserts. He showed himself to be an ungrateful man, for, although but a simple prince, she made him King when she married him, and raised him to a rank that has always satisfied even the greatest in the land. Ladies should take warning of this man, when they think to do honour to one beneath them in rank by taking him to husband and entrusting him with their honour and their property for life; there may come a time when he will break his bond and attempt to assert his prerogative over his wife. As a young gallant once said to me: nothing is so insupportable as a yoke imposed by one who has himself been raised to the position which alone enables him to impose it. But enough has been said on this Infante of Majorca, who is really of very small account. We ought to accuse the author of the 'History of Naples,' whose name, by the way, is Pandolfo Collenuccio, for having spoken so slightly of the Queen, and pin our faith upon what Froissart says; he was half an Englishman, it is true, but he does not flatter the English to such an extent in his writings as never to speak well of the French,—that he leaves to Italian historians. This is what Froissart says (and he was himself of that time):

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'This James, or Jacques, of Majorca wished to be revenged on the King of Aragon for having invaded his kingdom of Majorca and put his father to death in prison at Barcelona, and for this reason he made war against the Kings of Aragon and Castille. But fortune went so much against him that he was taken in the town of Valladolid and fell into the hands of King Henry of Castille. Jacques implored him not to give him up to the King of Aragon, his mortal enemy. King Henry consented to keep him, and he remained a prisoner until such time as Jacques' wife, the Queen of Naples, and the Marquise de Montferrat, came to hear of his captivity. They were both deeply distressed at the news, and left no stone unturned in their efforts to induce the King to set him free, which he eventually did, for a ransom of three hundred thousand florins. The two ladies paid the money over to him with such genuine marks of courtesy that King Henry was delighted at their conduct.'

This is what Froissart says in his first volume: in the second, he relates how the said Queen paid a visit to Pope Clement at Fondi, and goes on to say how she humbled herself before him and confessed everything to him, concealing nothing. Froissart uses these very words: 'And when the Queen of Naples had come to Fondi, she humbled herself before the new Pope and confessed her sins to him.' And then he proceeds to give us an account of what she said to the Pope: how, in company with her husband, Lord Otho of Brunswick, she paid him a

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visit in order to place at his disposal all the territories which belonged to her, but which Charles Durazzo had seized upon, that the Pope might give them to whomsoever he pleased. Clement accepted the gift, and having heard that Urban and the Romans were desirous of winning over the Neapolitans to their interest, he himself retired from Fondi to Avignon, and presented the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily to the Duke of Anjou, who was a rich and powerful prince, and who signified his determination to visit those parts with such an army as would enable him to resist all the enemies of the Queen.

Thus Froissart in his second volume. Surely we ought to believe him rather than that other historian of Naples, who, like all foreign writers, is anxious to say as little as possible in favour of the French; indeed, he could hardly have said worse things about her, beautiful princess though she was; she was a Frenchwoman, of noble French blood; that was enough in itself to make him decry her. But Froissart has taken the trouble to repeat the very words used by the Queen in her confession to the Pope. I do not say that she did not keep silent on one or two points—such as the death of André and certain little love episodes that had occurred in her life—but she said enough to give the lie to that fine fool, the Neapolitan historian.

As for her fourth husband, Lord Otho, she certainly did no wrong in marrying him, for he was of one of the noblest families in Christendom,

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and a great soldier. She had need of such a man to help her in the government of her affairs, and right well did he serve her in this capacity. She was fully aware of the fact that he had made her an excellent husband in every sense of the word, and when the crisis came she interceded for him so forcibly that she succeeded in saving his life, though, poor lady, not her own.

I should much like to know whether, in the light of all I have said, this brave Queen deserved to be so maliciously calumniated in her lifetime, or whether she deserved the death that fell to her lot. God Almighty, just avenger of the death of the innocent, took vengeance for hers, both on Hungary in general, and Charles Durazzo in particular. With reference to the latter, we read how Marguerite, sister to Queen Jeanne, invited him to a banquet on the occasion of his visit to Buda, and, while he was drinking, she, feigning to caress him the while, caused him to be struck down by a blow dealt at the back of his neck by an axe, and so he died.

It is likewise possible that it was the will of the Lord that Hungary should suffer misfortune at the hands of the Turks in punishment for the shedding of the blood of this noble princess.

Her tomb in the Church of Saint Claire, at Naples, is held in deep reverence by the ladies and holy nuns of the convent there. The latter are in the habit of offering up prayers for her soul, in which they praise her name, and set her among the best and wisest princesses in Christendom, as we read

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in the 'History of Anjou.' It is there stated that in the great schism which had come to the Church at the expense of peace in Christendom, among those who stood for Pope Clement were the King of France, his brothers, and the good Queen Jeanne of Sicily and Naples. Thus is she spoken of in this history; when she paid her visit to the Pope she met with a most honourable reception at his hands and at the hands of all the cardinals, as the book tells us, for she was considered to have spent a righteous and sober life. After she had sojourned there for several days she requested the Holy Father to hear her confession and absolve her from her sins, which the Pope gladly did—in good sooth he could have done no less, for such beauty as hers well merited secret confession, speedy absolution, and an easy penance, if ever beauty did.

After her confession, the Queen publicly declared, in the presence of his Holiness and the holy college of cardinals, that she held several lands and possessions of the Church which her father had taken by force, and which, when he lay sick unto death, he had begged her, his daughter, in the event of her dying without children, to give back into the hands of the Pope, in accordance with what her grandfather, King Robert, had laid down in his last will and testament. She then went on to tell them of the evil done her by her ungrateful nephew, Charles Durazzo, and how he had many times endeavoured to bring about her death in order to get possession of her property. But for her part, she

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continued, she had no desire other than to observe the last wishes of her father and grandfather and, in the presence of the whole assembly, she resigned into the hands of the Pope the kingdoms of Sicily and Naples, the duchies of Apulia and Calabria, and the county of Provence—all of this is stated in Froissart. The Pope accepted her gift and, acting on his advice, she adopted Louis, Duc d'Anjou, as her son. Careful maps were made of the various countries involved, and the whole transaction recorded in due form. The Pope also bought the county of Avignon, her own private property, from her, deducting from the purchase money a sum which represented the amount of taxes due to him, which had up to then been left unpaid. From that hour to this, Avignon has always belonged to the Church.

Whether her gift still holds good, I leave it to learned jurists to decide. The Queen took leave of the Pope after this interview and returned to her own kingdom, where, not long afterwards, Charles Durazzo having been told of the son and heir whom she had adopted, made war upon her and took her prisoner, and eventually put her to death by strangling her between two cushions.

This is what Boccaccio, in his *Dames Illustres*, says of Queen Jeanne:

‘This Queen has so effectually cleared her country of robbers and bandits that not only the poor but even the rich can go where they will with impunity; whenever she heard of any brigands having taken refuge in some stronghold or other,

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thither would she despatch an army and drive them from their fastnesses.

‘And further, she has put so tight a rein on the princes and barons of the land that they have departed from their evil ways of living, and those who once held kings and queens of but little account now vie with one another in being the first to remark any shade of anger on their mistress’s face. She is moreover so prudent and wise a stateswoman that where treason might deceive her, mere cleverness or subtlety of intellect never would; when once she has made up her mind she holds to her decision, and nothing will induce her to turn from it. Fortune has dealt her some ugly blows during her lifetime; she has been tormented by the domestic quarrels of the King’s brothers, and has felt the horrors of a foreign war even at her very gates; flight, exile, the misdeeds of her husbands, the hatred of her nobles, the threats of popes, and countless other ills, has she experienced, and, with firm and invincible courage, she has in the end surmounted them, or borne them with admirable fortitude. Traits which would be highly esteemed in a brave and powerful king she displayed in her capacity as Queen and sole ruler of her country.

‘She had a fine presence, a pleasant and agreeable face, and a gracious and kindly manner of speech; and although she could, when the occasion called for it, display great dignity and majesty, yet at the same time she could show herself to be kindly, friendly, pitying, gay and gentle, so that men

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looked upon her rather as a companion than a queen.

‘To do justice to the fine qualities of her mind would take me too long.

‘In short, I esteem her not only a most excellent woman, but one who has justly earned the reputation of having ennobled the whole of Italy during her lifetime.’

Surely these are fine words of praise, and words worthy of our consideration. To be frank, I can only say that, in my opinion, the writer has not said enough, for so great and worthy a subject requires not a few short sentences but a long and carefully worded history. In fact, the aforesaid Boccaccio is in this case chargeable with ingratitude, for if what is said of him be true—that he loved the Queen’s sister, Marie, Comtesse d’Artois, and wrote his two books, *La Flammette* and *Philocope*, out of love for her—he ought by rights to have written in glowing terms of the sister of his mistress, for he could have done so better than any man in the world. But it is my belief that he never really received such favours at the hands of this great lady, as he tells us he did, but that he forged most of them on the anvil of his poetic fancy, as so many writers do, whom it often pleases to imagine a great subject and put it before the world as fact. They can write the better for being unhampered by any consideration whatever, and those who read, do so with the more pleasure.

Moreover, it is hardly seemly to suppose that this fair and great princess burned with such flames as

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are described in *La Flammette*; in this book Boccaccio give us the impression that she is madly in love with him, dying for him, pursuing him unceasingly and unrestrainedly. A likely story! And he such a handsome fellow, according to portraits of him which I have seen in Florence and Naples and many other places! Her husband, the count, was a far finer man, and a hundred times more desirable; it is much more likely that the countess reserved her love for her lord.

It is true, she might have been in love not with his body but his soul; I have known many cases of grand ladies who have fallen in love with learned men and scholars. Have we not all heard of that Queen of France, who was descended from the royal house of Scotland, and whom some call Madame la Dauphine (she was married to Louis XI. when he was still only Dauphin)—have we not heard how, passing one day through the hall, she espied Alain Chartier lying asleep on a bench, and went and kissed him most affectionately? Her lady-in-waiting remonstrated with her for having embraced the ugliest man in the kingdom, as who should say: ‘Had he been handsome, I could have understood it!’ (An edifying view!) The Queen replied: ‘I do not kiss him in the ordinary way; but I kiss the mouth from which so many fine words and golden sentences have fallen, and which, if it were possible, I should like to feel.’

That famous Roman lady said almost the same thing to Sulla one day, when they were at the public games and she, possibly in love with him,

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pressed his foot as she passed him, as if by accident, and suddenly leaned upon his shoulder to prevent herself from falling. Sulla asked her what she would, and she replied: 'Nothing but to see if I could, by touching you, feel a little your good fortune.' A clever ruse, surely, this, to win the love of a great man!

It is possible that the Princess Marie loved Boccaccio in a similar way, for his fine writing, and in the hope that he would render her immortal by his account of her virtues; but the gallant author did nothing of the kind; he only went and wrote two lying books of fiction, which have scandalised the world rather than edified it. But poets and courtiers are prone to publish accounts of their pleasures, whether they be false or true; I have known many who have done so, of whom I hope to speak on another occasion.

To return to our Queen Jeanne: I maintain that Boccaccio would have acquired a hundred times greater renown had he written worthily of her; and Petrarch too, who was also of this time, had he written all the fine verses that he wrote to his Laura in praise of this Queen, would have added lustre to his name, for she was a hundred times more beautiful than Laura.

Her portrait, which is still to be seen, shows us a woman who looks more like an angel than a human being. I have seen her at Naples, in many grand and imposing circumstances. I have seen her in France, in the closets of our kings and queens. Certainly she was a very beautiful

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princess, who in her face combined extreme gentleness with majestic dignity. In her portrait she is to be seen clad in a gown of crimson velvet trimmed with gold and silver embroideries. The dress was made in polonaise fashion, such as our ladies of to-day wear on very grand occasions, and on her head she wore a small bonnet arranged on the top of her hair-cap. In short, there is nothing in the portrait to suggest anything but great beauty and true majesty, such as would call up admiration, and even love, in all beholders.

I once read a panegyric of her in a Spanish book I happened to pick up, of which the following is a translation:—‘There comes to my mind this great and resplendent light of Italy, a light such as it is only the special glory of royal kings and queens to shed—namely, that of the Lady Jeanne of Jerusalem and Sicily, whose clear rays shine all the clearer for her own brave and generous heart. And all the lesser lights of the day, by the side of hers, seem but flickering flames compared with a great fiery furnace, so bright a light is hers.’

Before I leave the subject of this Queen, I should like to recount something I read in an old Italian book on duelling, written by Paris de Puteo, a doctor of laws. He tells us how this fair Queen was one day holding an open ball, in the town of Gayette, on the occasion of a grand wedding, or some such festival, and how, mingling with the lords and gentlemen of her Court, she chose a certain Galeasso of Mantua, one of the most ac-

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complished gentlemen of the time in Italy, as her partner in the dance. When it was over, and he had acquitted himself honourably, he came to her, as she sat upon her throne, and made her a very low bow on bended knee, thanking her humbly for the honour she had done him. Not knowing how better to requite her for her gracious courtesy in choosing him as her partner for the dance, he told her that he had made a vow from henceforth to spend his life travelling from place to place throughout the world as a knight-errant, until such time as he should have vanquished two other knights in fair fight and brought them to her feet as prisoners, to do with as she liked. The Queen answered him quite simply, saying that she hoped that, by the grace of God, he might fare well on his journey and in the accomplishment of his vow.

The knight, consequently, departed, and came in due course to France, Burgundy, England, Italy, Spain, Germany, Hungary, and other regions, provinces, and countries, where the noble flower of chivalry still flourished. On his way he fought and slew all who stood in his path, and eventually, partly by his own valour and strength, partly by good fortune, vanquished the two knights whom he had promised to his lady, and at the end of a year he returned to the kingdom of Naples and presented them on bended knee to the Queen, thus accomplishing his vow with all solemnity. The Queen, for her part, with a graciousness and dignity in which she was never lacking, accepted his gift in acknowledgment of his vow's fulfilment, offer-

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ing the knight every courtesy, and dubbing him her true and worthy cavalier. To the prisoners she said: 'Gentlemen, you are my prisoners, as you see. By the rights of war, I can employ you in my service in whatever way seems good to me: but I think you can easily see from my face that cruelty forms no part of my nature, and I intend to treat you with humanity and mercy, and give you back from this hour your full liberty. Go, and do whatsoever you please; return to your own country, if you will, or remain here and fight for mine. At least I would advise you to spend a little time in seeing the sights of our town, which I venture to think will interest you greatly. Before you depart, come to me, that I may bid you farewell.'

The two knights were, as may well be imagined, delighted at their reception, and lost no time in making a tour of inspection round the town, admiring the many wonderful sights they saw; when they had seen all, they came to bid farewell to their Queen and mistress (for were they not her slaves?), and she restored them their liberty as she had promised. When she had presented them with money for their journey, and made them a gift of two massive gold chains, she set them on their way, and they journeyed homeward rejoicing over their adventure, not forgetting, we may be sure, to sing the praises of the Queen wherever they went, as indeed they had good cause. Thus does Doctor Paris exalt the good Queen Jeanne.

I have also read a book written in England, en-

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titled 'An Apology for or Defence of the honourable Sentence and very just Execution of the late Mary Stuart, last Queen of Scotland.' In it the author makes several comparisons between Queen Jeanne of Naples and the Queen of Scotland, both in respect of her life, her morals, her amours, and the manner of her death. After reading it one would conclude that never were two women's lives so much alike. I will, in a few words, repeat what the author says on the subject.

Queen Jeanne, loving the Duke of Tarento, put to death her husband Andreasse. Queen Mary of Scots, loving Count Bothwell, put her husband to death.

Queen Jeanne, on her husband's death, immediately married the Duke of Tarento, a near relation. Queen Mary, on her husband's death, married Count Bothwell.

Queen Jeanne did not long enjoy the love of the aforesaid duke, for he died shortly after her marriage. Queen Mary, in the same way, did not long enjoy the love of Bothwell, for he was attacked and persecuted by the nobility of the country, and obliged to fly to Denmark, where he died; and the Queen, too, soon after this, was a fugitive and a prisoner in England. Through Queen Jeanne the lands of France and Italy were rent with schism, and two popes were set up. Queen Mary sowed the seeds of schism and sedition in Scotland and in England.

Queen Jeanne sent to the Pope at Avignon for help against Charles Durazzo. Queen Mary asked for help against the Queen of England.

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Queen Jeanne also sent to Charles, King of France, and Louis, Duke of Anjou, to ask for reinforcements. Queen Mary asked for reinforcements from the King of Spain and her cousin (the book says her nephew, but he was her cousin), the Duc de Guise.

Queen Jeanne had the support of great and powerful princes in France, Provence, and elsewhere. Queen Mary had at different times the support of three Popes, the King of Spain, the Duc de Guise, and, in England, that of several dukes, lords, and noblemen, who were secretly in favour of her cause.

Finally, Queen Jeanne was strangled in prison, and died the same death that she had inflicted on her husband. Queen Mary, too, was beheaded, when in prison.

The book then goes on to argue the point as to whether one great man has the right to put to death another who is his equal. It brings forward the case of Constantine the Great, who condemned Licinius to death, showing that such treatment was possible between two great men. I refer the matter to those shrewd lawyers who take delight in settling knotty points.

All who care to believe the more truthful accounts of these two queens, rather than the untruthful and ill-founded, will see that the lot of one was in many respects similar to that of the other, and will agree that men did a great wrong in putting them to so shameful a death. No one is more mischievous or dangerous to the State

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than the man who is a writer of lies. The case of poor Dido is often in my mind in this connection; she, both when she was a married woman and when she was a widow, was a wise and virtuous princess; and yet, see how Virgil has decried her, envious, no doubt, of her virtue and her chastity!

But it is not only of Dido, and of our two queens of Sicily and Scotland, that men have spoken ill, but of thousands and thousands of queens, princesses, and noble ladies. We must be careful never to believe all that we read. I have now said enough about Queen Jeanne I.

II

QUEEN JEANNE II.

QUEEN JEANNE II. succeeded to the throne some time after Queen Jeanne I. She became queen after the death of her brother, Ladislas, of whom I hope also to speak, later on. Some say that she was great-niece to Queen Jeanne I. We could easily decide this from the genealogy given in the 'History of Naples,' but, as it in no way concerns us here, let it pass. Suffice it to say that she came of the noble blood of France, and having, on the death of her brother, entered upon her kingdom, she remained in peaceable possession of her heritage, supported by a very goodly company of officers, in command of an army numbering sixteen thousand horse which Ladislas had got together.

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She was a widow when she went into Hungary, taking with her a Neapolitan noble, called Pandolfo Allopo, whom she fashioned after her own heart and brought up to be her chamberlain. Chamberlain indeed he was, and well did he serve his lady, never leaving her room either by day or by night, so that first her courtiers and then her people began to wonder at her conduct. To appease them she made up her mind to marry again, and chose Jacques de Narbonne as her second husband. He is thus spoken of by the author of the 'History of Naples,' but Messire Ollivier de la Marche, a noble lord and reliable historian, calls him Jacques de Bourbon, and I am inclined to think he is right. He was made to promise, on his marriage, that he would never attempt to assume the title of King, but only that of Prince of Tarento, or Duke, or Count. As a fact, he preferred to keep his own name. But certain of the Queen's captains who hated her favourite, Pandolfo, and who hated Sforce, put it into his head to take the name of King. They went out to meet him on his return from a journey one day and one and all saluted him as their King, except Sforce, a very brave man, who persisted in calling him Count. For this, on the advice of the others, Sforce was put in prison and punished with several stripes of the lash, and poor Pandolfo had his head cut off. But for his sister, a similar fate would have fallen to Sforce, but she got together a party of men and won over some of the King's party and by that means managed to effect her brother's release.

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Jacques now put the Queen completely on one side, leaving her no voice in the management of her affairs; he kept her confined to her room, and seldom visited her for any purpose whatever; and he even went so far as to insult her to her face and speak harshly to her on every possible occasion.

The Queen, clever woman that she was, hid her chagrin at his treatment and, although her friends took it very ill, and could not but feel for her in her affliction, she pretended to amuse herself and spend her time quite happily (so says the History), in dancing and singing, pastimes to which the French are very much addicted. But to her more intimate friends she could not fail to show how she chafed and fretted, and often spoke to them, chiefly by hints and surreptitious signs, of her longing to reassert herself and remedy the evil that had come upon her by her marriage.

It came to pass that one day a certain Julio Cæsare of Capua, who had on a previous occasion offended the Queen, now tried to regain her favour by offering to murder her husband. She, with ready wit, eagerly embraced the opportunity to wreak vengeance on Julio, and at the same time find her way again into her husband's good graces, and regain her liberty, by pretending at first to give ear to the conspirator and find out from him the manner in which he intended to execute his plan.

She then laid the whole thing before the King, and, summoning Julio into the room, denounced him before her husband and unfolded the plot

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which he had planned against his life. Jacques, when he heard of it, immediately put Julio to death (he was publicly beheaded), and took the Queen once more into his confidence, looking upon her as a woman who was indeed a loyal wife to her husband. '*Così si pigliano le volpi*,' as the Italian proverb says.

Shortly after this he set her at liberty, and gave her permission to go where she would and encouraged her to help him to govern. Wherefore when they were one day seated at a banquet and she saw that the occasion was ripe, she suddenly, with the help of her friends and accomplices, gained the upper hand and, amid the shouts of her people, captured and put to death all the French officers who had taken sides with her husband against her, and Jacques himself she flung a prisoner into the castle of Ovo. He managed, however, to effect his escape, and embarking in a Genoese skiff that happened to be in the harbour, he came to Tarento, whither the Queen followed him, laying siege to the town. When he found he could not long hold out against her attack he abandoned the place and betook himself to France, where, devoting himself to a religious life, he spent the remainder of his days.

We may see from this how much a clever woman can accomplish in the way of vengeance, if she lays her plans carefully, and how she ought to treat an upstart husband whom she, as a great lady, has honoured by marrying, and who has shown himself so ungrateful as to treat her abominably and

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even to make an attempt upon her life. Such ingratitude deserves the punishment that fell to King Jacques, if not a worse one.

I have read in the History of the great Ollivier de la Marche, that when this king came to Besançon, with the intention of becoming a Franciscan friar, he saw him himself (for he was there at the time) borne by four men in a barrow, for all the world like the barrows employed to cart dung and manure, in which he half lay and half sat (the silly fellow!), reclining against a very dirty feather pillow, and clad in a long gown of some cheap grey material, with a cord round his waist and a great white cap on his head, tied beneath his chin. He only lacked a cock's feather in his cap to complete him! I think that if his wife had seen him decked out in this fashion she could not but have laughed at him, as many must have done. Indeed there are many who have a very poor opinion of such converts and say, with a great man whom I know in France, when he saw M. de Joyeuse in the habit of a monk, doing penance: 'The fellow would be finely taken in if it turned out that there were no paradise in the world to come.' It was old Marshal Biron who made the remark.

To return to our Queen Jeanne: after her husband's departure she had to endure a great deal of hostility from her people, and met with so many reverses that she was compelled to summon King Alphonse of Aragon to her aid, and adopt him as her son. He agreed to come to her assistance on such terms as she offered, in spite

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of the solemn pact he had made with the Queen's predecessors. She was no better treated by him, however, than by her husband, and eventually had to drive him away. She then adopted Louis, Duc d'Anjou, and from him she never failed to receive all the honour and respect that were her due. After the death of her favourite, Count Avelin, Louis took the government of the kingdom entirely into his hands, and proved a good and faithful servant to the Queen, his adopted mother. She thanked God continually for sending her so good a son. It is stated in the 'History of Anjou' that some time before his death, her High Seneschal, Count Avelin, in fear lest the Duc d'Anjou might oust him from favour, one day remonstrated with the Queen, his mistress, and told her that she ran the risk of meeting with the same treatment at the duke's hands as she had received at the hands of the King of Aragon, if she gave him so much authority in the land. The Queen replied that she was far from forgetting what she had suffered in her choice of Alphonse, but between Louis of Anjou and Alphonse of Aragon there were many points of difference, in that one was a Frenchman and the other a Spaniard. She always had a very good opinion of the French.

From the 'History of Naples' we learn that the Queen for many years after her dismissal of King Alphonse enjoyed but little peace in the land, having to wage war against him continually, with the help of her trusty adviser, Sforce, and her son, Louis. The latter met his death in the year 1434, from a fever

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which he had contracted during the war, and which was augmented by the hardships he had had to undergo. He was bitterly mourned by his mother and all her people, for he was a kind and gentle prince, and they had expected great things of him.

At the end of that year the Queen herself died of a fever, after a reign of twenty years. It was a long period in those days, when nations were always changing hands. In her will she appointed René, Duc de Lorraine, brother of Louis, her heir. Thus did the line of King Charles I. of Anjou and Durazzo come to an end with Queen Jeanne. Throughout her lifetime she played the part of a virtuous and honourable princess. Ollivier de la Marche, who was of her time, calls her Jovenelle, and speaks of her as a woman of very keen intelligence and great knowledge, highly appreciated by her people.

Others tell us that the Queen never had any liking for collecting a bevy of ladies around her throne; there is no lack of fair women at Naples, and we are given to understand that her husband's conduct with her maidens was such as very justly to inspire her with jealousy. Married women who are thought to treat their husbands ill are not always to blame for their conduct, be it observed.

The 'History of Naples' is careful to inform us that this Queen left behind her the reputation of having been a shameless woman of very amorous disposition, who was never without a lover. As for that, I know of no vice in a great and beautiful princess which is less blameworthy; in fact, she could

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hardly have a more innocent failing. A princess who is spiteful, vindictive or tyrannical, as so many are, makes her people suffer for her sins, but a princess who is addicted to the delights of love, a worshipper at the shrine of Venus, cannot be said to hurt anybody. I once heard a great man talking on this subject, and remember well how he brought forward the argument that a beautiful princess could be likened to the sun; the sun sheds its rays on all alike and withholds them from none, and so too a princess should bestow her charms on all who may glow for love of her, and begrudge them to none. Alms and charity, he went on to say, are far more agreeable things when they are bestowed on all alike, rather than on one person in particular. And, in a similar way, any beautiful woman who has it in her power to content the world by her sweetness, her fair words, a sight of her lovely face, or her pleasant company, should do so; and if her love is solicited by many, let her give it to many rather than be so niggardly as to reserve it for one.

These remarks remind me of how I once went to see some pictures of a certain painter with a great lady of my acquaintance, and we came across one very fine picture, in which Fortune was painted on one side, seated on a round apple, and on the other, Venus, seated on a solid rock. One of my friend's women remarked: 'That picture tells a true tale; for, just as it represents the inconstancy of Fortune by the round apple, so too it teaches us, by the firm rock on which Venus is set, to be firm

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and constant in our love.' But her mistress, turning to her, took her up sharply with the words: 'That is the interpretation that such as you, whose charms are no more than ordinary, should put upon it, but for us, whose charms are very different, it is not the true one.' She would have had nothing to do with such a rock in her garden!

I have made this digression for the purpose of showing that even if Queen Jeanne were lavish of her charms and no laggard in love, she may well be excused; she was, as I have said, a very beautiful princess, as may be judged from her portrait, painted by Saint Jean of Caronnara at Naples.

It is said that more than all her lovers she loved Carracciolo, whom she treated with great favour, and appointed as her High Seneschal. Although of noble birth, he was in his youth but a poor man, and it is known that he employed his pen to earn a living. The late Prince of Melfe came of the same stock, so they tell me at Naples. The first opportunity that the Queen had of letting Carracciolo know that she loved him arose out of his fear of mice. One day when he was playing chess in her antechamber, she herself put a mouse down before him, and he, in his terror, ran from one place to another, and collided now with one person, now with another, and at last rushed through the door of the Queen's room and fell upon her Majesty. She soon found a way of telling him her love, when once she had him by her side, and we may be sure that he was not long in taking advantage of her

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confession. Not long afterwards she made him her High Seneschal.

This reminds me of a tale I once heard of a certain great lady and a nobleman of my acquaintance. The lady was of good family and of a virtuous disposition, as, indeed, was the nobleman. He loved her dearly and served her for many years, taking infinite delight in the contemplation of such of her charms as he was allowed a sight of—her face, her fine carriage, and magnificent figure. But these were all he saw, and meanwhile his affection grew and his desire waxed so hot that he was like to die of love, for he could not but be persuaded that under so fair an exterior still greater beauty lay concealed. At last fortune, so often the friend of us poor lovers, favoured him, for, just as the lady, on retiring, was about to take her nightdress from one of her women behind her bed curtain, she caught sight of a huge spider. Now there was nothing on earth that the lady had so great a horror of as spiders—they are certainly hideous animals. She would rather have jumped into the fire than encounter one, and when she saw it she rushed out from behind the curtain without a thought beyond that of getting away from the spider, and it happened that she ran right into the arms of her lover, all undressed as she was. Though he was at first greatly astonished, he soon understood what was the matter, for he knew how she hated spiders. Not being a fool, he did not go at once and kill the spider, but left that to his mistress's women; for himself, he spent the time

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in looking. Poor man, the fair sight he saw was from that time for ever before his eyes and went down with him to his grave; further consolation he had none. Often did he curse his fate that he had never been able to consummate his passion after the manner of the Queen and her High Seneschal, but that was not to be. She, as a queen, could herself arrange such a matter and appoint the hour and the place.

A certain gentleman of the Court one day told his lady of his love, and begged her to arrange some more private place for him to visit her than the Queen's chamber, where they then happened to be. The lady made answer to his solicitations: 'Do you but awaken the desire in me, and you need trouble yourself no further; I can find the means.' And it was the same with our good Queen Jeanne, the desire was hers, and therefore the means were not hard to find.

Before I finish my account of her, I should like to describe the splendid tomb that she had built for herself and her brother, Ladislas, before she died, at Saint Jean de Carbonnara, at Naples, a very fine church situated on an eminence at the farther end of the town.

The tomb is placed over the high altar, and fashioned in beautiful white marble. On the top of the sepulchre stands a figure of Ladislas on horseback, draped in a mantle of azure blue embroidered with fleurs-de-lys, a sword in his hand; and at his feet, in golden letters, are written the words:

'Divus Ladislaus.'

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Below this statue is the sepulchre itself, on which the figure of a king lies stretched, face upwards; and round him stands a group of fair women, and two children, who are supporting a curtain. Below this is written, in golden letters, which are half effaced, the words:

'Improba mors fratris, heu frater!'

And below that again Ladislas and Jeanne are seen seated on their thrones, with their sceptres in their hands. Very beautiful does Queen Jeanne appear, clad in her robes of state, richly embroidered with fleurs-de-lys. Round her stand her ladies, dressed in French fashion.

The whole is supported on four columns of marble, leaning against which are the colossal figures of four women, representing the four cardinal virtues.

It was in this noble manner that the sister performed her last pious offices to her brother, Ladislas, who had reigned as King before her.

Close by the tomb that I have just described, and a little to the front of it, there is a round chapel, in which may be seen another tomb of white marble, that of the Seneschal, Carracciolo, erected in his father's honour by his son, Trajan, Duke of Melfia.

The Seneschal was too great a favourite with the Queen to escape the envy and malice of other members of her Court; and one night his enemies came knocking at the door of his room, pretending that the Queen was asking for him, for that she was in danger of death. He rose in all haste and bade his valet open the door as he swiftly drew

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on some clothes; the murderers entered and slew him on the spot, and dragged his half-naked body on to a ledge outside the castle. They say that the Queen had given her consent to his death; at any-rate we have no record of her having punished the murderers.

His lot is an example of the fate that falls to all who build their faith on the favour of a woman; there is too great a lack of constancy in the charming sex for any hope of long-continued prosperity to be other than ill-founded.

I will say no more on the subject of these two Queens. I fear I may have been prolix in speaking of them, but what I have said I had to say, for they were brave Queens—hated by some, it is true, for is it not ever the nature of men to abhor determination and strength of character in women?

CHAPTER VIII

SOME ILLUSTRIOUS SISTERS

I

ISABELLA OF AUSTRIA, WIFE OF CHARLES IX., KING OF FRANCE

DONNA ISABELLA of Austria, who was married to King Charles IX., may be said to have been one of the best, the sweetest, the wisest and the most virtuous of all the queens of France that ever ruled our land. I can say so, and so can all who ever saw her, without detracting from the virtues of others, and with no fear of overstepping the truth. She was a very beautiful princess, with as fair and delicate a complexion as any lady of her Court. Although only of medium height, she was possessed of a very fine figure. A wise, virtuous, and pious woman, she never did harm to anyone, and never offended a single person by anything she ever said. She was discretion personified, and was never known to talk much; when she did speak, it was always in Spanish.

Without being in any way bigoted, she was deeply religious, and displayed her zeal for the Holy Church by many outward acts of kindness and of love. She did not fail to attend matins and

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vespers and all the services ordained by the Church, but even here she observed moderation, and her attendance was never excessive. But it is nevertheless a fact, according to her women, that when she was alone in bed at night and the curtains were drawn, she was in the habit of kneeling up in bed in her nightgown and praying to God for an hour at a time, beating her breast the while, and mortifying her flesh in pious ecstasy. This would never have been known, at anyrate until after the death of her husband, King Charles, had not one of the women, whose duty it was to sleep in the same room, one night peeped through the bed curtains and seen her at her devotions. She was an intimate friend of the Queen's, and took occasion, on discovering that she occupied herself in this way every night, to remonstrate with her, saying that she would surely injure her health. The Queen was annoyed to think that she had been seen, and at first attempted to deny the accusation of devotion, but, seeing that that was impossible, she ordered the woman to say nothing at all about it. Indeed she desisted for one night, but after that she resumed her prayers, thinking her women would not notice. But they saw the shadow of her nightlight behind the bed curtains; she used to light it and take it in on to the bed, in order to read the Bible during a certain part of the night. Such devotion could hardly be termed hypocritical, when performed in such great secrecy; the Queen had little in common with those who say their prayers aloud and in public, in order that the world may say

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of them that they are zealous worshippers of the Lord.

In this way did the Queen pray for the soul of the King, her husband, over whose death she grieved bitterly, but always in private, with low sighs and quiet tears, so that men marvelled at her self-restraint; they knew well that she suffered agony in her soul, as much, indeed, as do those who tear their hair and cry aloud in their anguish, hoping to gain credit with the world for the bitterness of their suffering. I call to mind how, during the King's illness, she came to visit him one day as he lay in bed, and sat down beside him, not by his pillow, as she usually did, but at some little distance away, and remained there with her eyes fixed on his face so that she might almost be said to be doting upon his beloved features. So careful was she of the tears she shed that the King hardly perceived her to be weeping, but only thought her eyes were wet, and saw that from time to time she had occasion to wipe her nose. She pitied the poor invalid too much to torture him further by a display of her own anguish.

When she left him she went straight to her room and prayed to God for his deliverance. She loved him very dearly, and honoured him too, although she knew that he was of an amorous disposition and had enjoyed the society of several mistresses in the course of his life. But she never reproached him, and bore her little jealousies in silence, not seeming to begrudge his mistresses the love that should all have been hers. She was,

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indeed, a very suitable mate for him: we might compare them to fire and water, for the King was a quick, changeable, and impetuous man, while she was ever cool and temperate.

A friend told me one day that, during her widowhood, one of the more intimate among her women once ventured to console her by making the following remark (it was one among many condolences that she offered the Queen, but it could hardly be brought forward as giving evidence of much tact on the lady's part): 'At anyrate, Madame,' she said, 'had God seen fit to send you a son instead of a daughter, you would now be Queen-Mother of a king; you would, in that case, be held of more account and your position be the more assured.'

'Alas!' replied the Queen, 'what sad nonsense you talk. As if France had not misfortunes enough at this hour, without my producing another, to complete her ruin! Had I a son, there would inevitably be endless troubles during his minority, and more war and bloodshed than ever. All would try to get as much for themselves out of the poor child as they possibly could, as they would have done in the case of the King, my husband, when he was himself a minor, had it not been for the Queen-Mother and her faithful servants. She knew how to combat the enemy, but as for me, had I had a son, I should only have grieved that I had conceived him and brought down upon me the curses of my people, whose voice, after all, we should look upon as the voice of God. Therefore do I praise God for the seed that He has sown in me, whether for good or whether for ill.'

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In such a manner as this did the good Queen show consideration for the country in which she had come to take up her abode. I have heard it said that at the time of the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, she knew nothing at all of the horrors of the night, but went to rest and slept quietly. When she awoke in the morning and was told what had happened: 'Alas!' she exclaimed, 'the King, my husband. Does he know?' 'Yes, Madame,' they replied, 'it is he who is responsible.'

'*O mon Dieu!*' she cried, 'what are you saying? What counsellors can have given him such advice? Dear God, I beg and pray you to pardon him: for, if you do not take pity upon him, I fear lest his offence may go unpardoned.' And she immediately asked for her beads and, with tears in her eyes, knelt down to pray to God.

I wish especially to call the reader's attention to the Queen's behaviour on this occasion. She had every reason to desire the total extinction of Monsieur l'Admiral and his party, for it was directly opposed to her own, which she honoured above everything in the world; but for all that she never once expressed approval of the way in which the defeat of the Huguenots had been effected, and took no pleasure whatever in the thought. She could not but see how the Protestants harassed the King, her husband, and well remembered how one of the last things her father, the Emperor, had said to her, when she was leaving him to come to France, had been: 'My daughter, you are about to become queen of one of the finest,

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most powerful and greatest kingdoms in the world, and I count you among the most happy of women. But you would be happier still if you could find an undivided kingdom, flourishing as it flourished in the days gone by. You will find, my daughter, a country divided against itself, and on the one side you will stand, with the King, your husband, while on the other there will be the lords and princes of the Religion, to oppose your wishes in whatever way they can.' And even as he said, so did she find it when she came to live among us.

When she was a widow, most of the ladies and gentlemen of her Court were of the opinion that the new King, on his return from Poland, would marry her, for all that she was his sister-in-law. He could do so on obtaining dispensation from the Pope, who has enormous power in matters such as these, especially where kings and queens are concerned. There were many reasons why this marriage should take place, into which it is not necessary for me to go. One, however, I may mention, and that is the great kindness which the King had received at the hands of the Emperor of Austria at the time of his return from Poland; there can be little doubt that, had the Emperor put the least obstacle in his way, our King would never have succeeded in getting away from Poland at all. The Poles wished to keep him, but he evaded them and left without bidding them farewell. The Germans, however, lay in wait for him wherever they thought he was likely to come (his journey home might be compared to that of Richard, the brave King of

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England, when returning from the Holy Land), and they would certainly have taken him and thrown him into prison and kept him there until a ransom was paid, for the Protestant princes all bore him a deadly grudge for his share in the awful massacre. But of his own free will, and without further thought of the consequences, he threw himself upon the mercy of the Emperor, who received him very graciously, and as kindly as though he had been his brother. After keeping him for a few days, the Emperor himself led the King in safety through his dominions, by short journeys, so that, by his mercy, King Henri reached Carinthia, the lands of Venice, Venice itself, and ultimately his own country.

Many thought that King Henri III. would repay such timely aid by binding himself still closer to Austria, and taking the Emperor's daughter to wife. But he had once met at Blasmont, in Lorraine, a certain Mademoiselle de Vaudemont, Louise de Lorraine, one of the most beautiful and accomplished princesses in Christendom, and had become so deeply enamoured of her charms that it was not long before they plighted their troth. He nursed his passion throughout his journey, and on his return to Lyons despatched M. de Gua, one of his chief favourites (as indeed he deserved to be), to Lorraine, where he concluded the marriage on behalf of his master, King Henri, without much difficulty.

To return once more to our young Queen Isabella. She had no longer any desire to remain in

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France, for many reasons, the chief among them being that she was not any longer treated with the respect that was her due; and she made up her mind to spend the rest of her days with her parents, the Austrian Emperor and Empress. When she had been some little time in Austria, the Catholic King, who had lately lost his wife, Anne of Austria, expressed a desire to marry his niece, Isabella, and sent his sister, the Empress, to make his intentions known to her daughter. But she would not hear of it, although she was approached not once, but three times in all, by her mother, the Empress. She replied in each case that she had no wish to sully the memory of her husband's ashes by a second marriage, nor to marry so near a relation, for in doing so she felt that she would be committing a grave offence against the decrees of Heaven. Whereupon the Empress and the King, her brother, having talked the matter over together, sent a very learned and smooth-tongued Jesuit to speak to her. He exhorted her to the utmost of his power to comply with the King's request, and did not fail to quote many passages of Holy Scripture in support of his arguments; he was clever enough to find many that served his purpose well. But Isabella confounded him completely by her replies to his sophistries, for since her widowhood she had spent a great deal of time in the contemplation of the Word of God; moreover her firm resolution, which was her strongest safeguard, never to forget her husband by marrying a second time, was an irrefutable argument in the discussion. The

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worthy Jesuit returned, without having accomplished anything, to Spain, whither he was summoned in a letter from the King of Spain. He took back with him a very unsatisfactory impression of his interview with the widowed Queen, for she had, in the end, grown weary of his talk and had spoken harshly to him and even used threats; she silenced him by remarking that if he persisted in what he was saying he would repent it, for she would have him whipped in her kitchen like any scullion. I have even heard it said (but I know not whether it be true) that, on his returning a third time to the subject, she lost complete control of herself and carried out her threats by giving him a sound thrashing. I can hardly believe this, however, for she had all her life a great regard for pious and holy men, of whatever persuasion.

This virtuous Queen preserved her constancy to the end, and remained ever faithful to the memory of the King, her husband. Her regrets for his death and the tears she shed for him no doubt hastened her death, for she was not more than thirty-five when she died—and yet she did not leave the earth before she had proved a very mirror of virtue to all good women in Christendom.

If she showed how great was her love for her husband by her admirable constancy and continence, she gave further proof of it in her treatment of the Queen of Navarre, her sister-in-law. When she heard that the latter was reduced to extreme poverty in her château of Auvergne, and abandoned by most of her friends, and most of those whom she

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had, in the days of her prosperity, befriended, she sent one of her people to visit her and offer her what help she could. Isabella gave her as much as half her income while she remained in France and took leave of her as affectionately as if she had been her own sister; the Queen of Navarre would certainly have suffered even more terribly than she did, poor lady, had it not been for our good Queen Isabella. They say that when Isabella died, she was heartbroken, and so deeply did she mourn her loss that she kept her bed for twenty days. No one regretted her more, nor spoke of her in fairer terms after she was gone; there is no need to seek further than Queen Marguerite of Navarre for praise and eulogy of good Queen Isabella; what she has said is alone enough to render her immortal.

This is all I need say of Queen Isabella, her goodness, her virtue, her constancy and her continence, and, withal, her loyal love for the King, her husband. It was in her nature to be virtuous and holy (M. de Langeac, who was in Spain when she died, told me that the Empress said to him: 'The best among us is no more'), and all her life she tried to follow the example of her mother, her great-aunts, and her aunts.

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II

MARIE OF AUSTRIA, WIFE OF THE EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN II.

THE Empress, although still young and very beautiful when her husband died, never married again, but was wisely content to remain a widow for the rest of her life, quitting Austria and Germany, the land of her empire, after the death of her husband, the Emperor. She joined her brother in Spain, at his request, and proved of great assistance to him in the management of his affairs. I have heard the late King Henri III., who was an excellent judge of persons, say that she was very much to his liking, and one of the shrewdest princesses in the world. On her way to Spain she passed through Germany and came to Italy, whence she embarked for the Peninsula. She set sail in the month of December, but bad weather overtook her at Marseilles, where she was obliged to put in. She was, however, most unwilling to enter the harbour, for fear, in some way or other, of giving offence, and she herself only landed but once, for the purpose of seeing the town. She had to wait some eight days before fair weather set in. It was her usual practice every morning to leave the ship (she always slept on board) and go to hear mass at the Church of Saint Victor; her dinner would be brought to her there, and when she had dined she would spend the after-

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noon chatting with her own people or with the gentlemen of Marseilles, who paid her all the honour and respect to which she was entitled; the King had sent word that she was to be treated with every courtesy, in return for the gracious welcome she had accorded him in Vienna. She was grateful to the people for their kindly reception, and treated them in a very friendly manner, as though she were herself French, rather than German, so that they formed a very good opinion of her, and she of them. She wrote and told the King that they were the most courteous and charming men she had ever known, and went on to mention some twenty by name, among them M. Castellan, whom they called *Le Seigneur Altivity*, and who is interesting as having married '*la belle Châteauneuf*,' of the Court, and as having put to death the Grand Prior. He himself met his death at the same time; I hope to speak of him on another occasion. It was his wife who gave me this account of the visit of the Empress to Marseilles, and discoursed at length on her perfections and told me how much she had enjoyed her sojourn at the French port. I was myself at Court at the time of her visit, and I remember, when the King heard of her coming, how anxious he was about her reception, as indeed it was right that he should be.

The princess still lives, and continues in her virtuous course; her brother, the King of Spain, is deeply indebted to her for the many services she has rendered him. She is now living in retire-

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ment in a convent of pious women, who are called in Spain '*descalçadas*,' for they wear neither shoes nor stockings. The sister of the Empress, the Spanish princess, was the founder of the order.

III

JOAN OF AUSTRIA, WIFE OF JOHN, INFANTE OF
PORTUGAL, AND MOTHER OF DOM SEBASTIAN

THIS princess of Spain was a very beautiful woman and of a very noble and majestic appearance. I had the honour of an intimate conversation with her when I was passing through Spain on my return from Portugal. When I went to make my bow for the first time to our Queen Elizabeth of France, and while I was talking with her, and telling her all the latest news from France and Portugal, Madame la Princesse was announced. The Queen said at once: 'Do not move, Monsieur de Bourdeilles. You are about to cast eyes upon a very lovely princess, whom it will delight you to see. She, too, will be glad to see you and hear news from you of the King, her son, whom you have seen but lately.' At this moment the princess entered the room, and I found her lovely indeed, and very much to my liking. She was beautifully dressed, and was wearing the Spanish cap, of white crêpe, which fell in a point very low on her forehead; otherwise she bore no marks of her widowhood on her attire, for her gown was of silk. I admired her exceedingly, and

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looked so fixedly at her that the Queen was obliged to call my attention away from so fair a sight by telling me that Madame la Princesse was waiting to hear news of her son, the King.

I approached and stooped to kiss the hem of her dress, and she welcomed me very graciously. She questioned me a great deal about her son, and asked me my opinion of the marriage that had been proposed between him and Madame Marguerite de France, our King's sister, now the Queen of Navarre. I talked to her at length, for in those days I could speak Spanish as well as, or even better than, my native language. Among other things she asked me whether her son was handsome, and whom he resembled. I told her that he was one of the handsomest princes in Christendom, as indeed he was, and resembled her in a very marked degree, for he was the image of his mother.

She smiled a little at this, and the colour mounted to her cheeks; it was plain that she was pleased with what I had said. After I had spoken to her for some considerable time, the Queen was summoned to supper, and the two sisters parted. As she went, the Queen said to me with a smile: 'You delighted her by what you said of her resemblance to her son.'

She went on to ask me what I thought about Princess Joan, and whether she was not all she had said she was, adding that she felt sure that she very much wanted to marry the King, her brother, and that she would be delighted to have her for a

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sister-in-law. I took care to repeat this to the King's mother when I returned to the Court, at that time stationed at Arles, in Provence. But she replied that Joan was too old for the King—old enough, in fact, to be his mother. I went on to tell her what I had heard on very good authority in Spain, that she was firmly determined never to marry again unless it were the King of France, and that, unless she married him, she purposed retiring from the world and going into a convent. She was convinced in her own mind that she would end her days in a convent, and had already in those days begun to build a nunnery for her subsequent retirement. She did not, however, lose all hopes of marrying the King of France until she heard of his marriage with her niece. It was then that she finally decided to lead a pious and holy life far away from the world, and leave to all women, great and small, an example worthy of following.

'God's will be done,' she said, 'I will give myself to Him, and to none other.'

To some, perhaps, it may seem regrettable that she had not married King Charles and exchanged the austere lot of widowhood for the delights of married life, but on the other hand it must be remembered that her wish to marry that great King may rather have been a manifestation of Spanish arrogance and pride than a genuine desire. Her sister was an empress, and she hoped, by aspiring to the throne of France, at least to equal her in rank.

She was, to my mind, one of the most accomplished

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foreign princesses that the world has ever seen, although one may not unjustly reproach her for retiring so early from public life, seeing that she was influenced rather by pique than by a spirit of devotion. But however that might be, she gave evidence of true holiness in the manner in which she ended her days.

IV

MARY OF AUSTRIA, WIFE OF LOUIS, KING OF HUNGARY

QUEEN MARY of Hungary, the aunt of Princess Joan of Austria, resembled her niece, in that she withdrew from the world, but, in her case, it was not until she had reached an advanced age that she did so. Her chief object in retiring was to assist the Emperor, her brother, and enable him to serve God the more devoutly. The Queen became a widow at a very early age, for she lost her husband, King Louis, when he was still quite a young man; he fell in battle against the Turks, having ventured, with only some ten thousand men, all good Christians, to enter upon a struggle with a hundred thousand infidels, who defeated him utterly; as he was withdrawing from the fight he fell into a marsh and was suffocated.

A similar misfortune happened to the last King of Portugal, Sebastian, who met with so miserable a defeat when he hazarded a battle against the Moors

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for which he was ill prepared, for they were three times as strong as he.

After the loss of the King, her husband, the great Queen Mary remained a widow; she was still very young and very beautiful, as many have told me who have seen her, and as her pictures show plainly. I have seen many portraits of her, and in none have I ever come across a single ugly trait, unless it be that her mouth was rather large and prominent, as are those of so many Austrian women. But as a fact Queen Mary had inherited her mouth not from her Austrian ancestors, but from those of Burgundy. A lady of the Court who was of her time told me once how Queen Eléonor, when passing through Dijon, went to pay her devotions at the monastery of Chartreux and there visited the ancient tombs of her ancestors, the dukes of Burgundy, and expressed a wish to have them opened for her inspection. Some of the bodies were so well preserved that she could recognise their features, and especially noticed their mouths. Whereupon she suddenly cried out: 'Methought we got our mouths from our Austrian ancestors, but I see that we are indebted for them to Marie of Burgundy, our grandmother, and other Burgundian ancestors of ours. If ever I see the Emperor, my brother, I shall take care to tell him so.' The lady who told me this heard it herself, for she stood by the Queen's side as she said it, and she went on to say how the Queen seemed pleased with the discovery she had made, for the house of Burgundy was quite a match for the house of

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Austria, since it could trace its origin to one of the great sons of France, Philip the Bold. Moreover, I could hardly name four more famous or more illustrious dukes than the last four of the dukes of Burgundy.

Queen Mary of Hungary was a very beautiful and charming woman, in spite of the fact that she displayed a slight tendency to what I may call mannishness. Not that this in any way affected the part she played in the court of love, but her principal interest was warfare, and she had a great talent for statesmanship and diplomacy. Her brother, the Emperor, was not slow to recognise this, and he sent for her, begging her to come and deliver him from the administration of the duties that had once belonged to his aunt, Margaret of Flanders, herself a very wise princess, who had ruled the Low Countries with justice and mercy. As long as Margaret of Flanders lived, King François never made war on that part of Europe, although the King of England often urged him to do so, for he was anxious to do nothing to displease so virtuous a princess, who had shown herself so good a friend to France. Margaret of Flanders was indeed as wise and virtuous as she was unhappy. She was first married to King Charles VIII., but he sent her back to her family very soon after he had espoused her. Her second husband was John, son of the King of Aragon, by whom she had a posthumous child who died shortly after birth; and for a third time she married the handsome Duke Philibert of Savoy, by whom she had no children. It was on

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account of her disappointment in this respect that she adopted the motto '*Fortune infortunée, fors une.*' She lies buried by the side of her husband in the fine convent of Brou.

The Queen of Hungary (to return to her) proved of very great assistance to the Emperor, who otherwise would have been quite without assistance in the administration of his affairs. True, he had a brother, Ferdinand, King of the Romans; but he had all he could do to keep the great Sultan at bay. The Emperor felt the affairs of Italy, at that time in great disorder, heavy on his hands, as well as those of Germany, which, on account of the depredations of the Grand Turk, were little less unsettled. Hungary itself he had, also, to keep in check, and Spain, when that country chose to rebel, led on by M. de Chièvres, not to mention the Indies, the Low Countries, Barbary, and, greatest burden of all, France. He appointed his sister, whom he loved above any one in the world, Governor-General of the Low Countries, where she served him well, for a period of some two and twenty years; I do not know what he would have done without her. He confided everything to her guidance, so much so that, even when he was himself in Flanders, he never interfered with the exercise of her authority. It is true that she, wise woman that she was, never did anything without first consulting him, and always reported to him everything that went on in her councils, thereby affording him very great pleasure. She successfully waged war in that

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country on several occasions, both in person and by means of her trusted officers. She herself was often present at battle, seated on horseback like any warrior of ancient times.

It was she who first thought of setting fire to our frontier castles, and many a fine house fell by her hand, notably that of Follembroy, a noble mansion built by our kings as a rendezvous when engaged in the pleasures of the chase. The King of France was greatly incensed at the destruction of so fine a building, and he was not long in wreaking his revenge on the famous *Maison de Bains*, which men regarded as almost a miracle of splendour and magnificence—one of the seven wonders of the world, in fact. The Queen entertained the Emperor Charles and all his Court there once, including his son, King Philip, who had come over from Spain to see his aunt. So magnificent were the honours done to the two royal personages that men ever afterwards spoke of that time as '*las fiestas de Bains*,' as the Spanish say. The like had never been seen before, and the splendour of the entertainments surpassed even those given to their people by the Roman emperors, which, indeed, they somewhat resembled, except for the absence of gladiatorial combats and fights of wild beasts, without which they were the more pleasant and agreeable.

I would willingly give a detailed description of all that took place, for I have read a Spanish account of the *fiestas*, and I have also heard them spoken of by some who were themselves present at

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the time of the Emperor's visit, but I fear lest, in so doing, I may be blamed for going too far away from my subject. I will reserve myself the pleasure for another occasion, for the subject well merits repetition.

We may be very sure that all that the Queen did in the way of sumptuous entertainment for her brother, the Emperor, was only done in return for all that he had done for her, in handing over to her the administration of the Low Countries. The Emperor greatly approved of her conduct, and especially admired a beautiful piece of tapestry which she had had worked for the occasion and on which was embroidered, in silk and silver and gold, representations of all the glorious victories he had won, all the grand enterprises he had undertaken, and the battles he had fought, not forgetting the flight of the Sultan before Vienna and the capture of King François.

But shortly after this the ill-fated mansion lost all the prestige it had ever enjoyed, for it was razed to the ground by the French. It is said that when she heard of its destruction the Queen fell into such a rage that it took many a long day to appease her wrath. One day, when she passed by the site on which it had stood, and saw the ruins, the tears welled up in her eyes, and she swore solemnly that the whole of France should repent the deed, and that she would never rest until Fontainebleau itself, of which Frenchmen were so proud, was brought to the ground and not one stone left standing on another. She vented her

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wrath finally on Picardy, and the poor Picardians had no reason to complain that she did not do it thoroughly. Had not a general peace intervened, she would have continued in her acts of vengeance, for she was a hard woman, not easily softened. Some have judged her as erring on the side of cruelty, but it is natural to women, especially great women, to be prompt to avenge their wrongs. The Emperor, so they say, only loved her the better for it.

When the Emperor assembled the States at Brussels for the purpose of taking farewell of them, he first addressed them at great length and then publicly thanked his sister, Mary, who was seated beside her brother, for all she had done. She thereupon rose from her seat and, bowing low to the Emperor, addressed the people in the following words:—‘Gentlemen, during the twenty-one years that it has pleased my brother, the Emperor, to give me charge over the Low Countries I have endeavoured by God’s grace to acquit myself of my duties to the best of my ability. If I have done wrong, I hope to be forgiven, for never to my knowledge have I appropriated anything to my own use unjustly, or spared myself in a task that has been set before me. And yet, if there are any among you who feel they cannot forgive me, I can bear their ill-feeling with the greater equanimity in that I know that my brother, the Emperor, is satisfied, for it has always been my chief desire to please him.’ Having spoken thus, with another low bow to the Emperor, she

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resumed her seat. Some thought her speech too arrogant for the occasion, and have reproached her for having after this fashion taken leave of a people whom she ought to have attempted to propitiate. But why? Her only anxiety was to please her brother and, as we know, from that moment her lot was to be cast on very different lines, for she was about to retire from the world and join her brother in his quiet retreat, mingling her prayers with his.

If the States were displeased, they dared not show it, for they knew only too well with whom they had to deal, and knew, indeed, that if they angered her, she would not hesitate to retaliate, even on this last occasion of all.

She accompanied her brother into Spain, and never afterwards left him, she and her sister, Queen Eléonor, remaining with him till he died. They all three died one year after the other. The Emperor went first, the Queen of France next, as she was the elder of the two sisters, and the Queen of Hungary last. The Queen of Hungary never married again, but remained a widow for very many years; her sister was three times married; once she married in order to become Queen of France, at the express request of the Emperor, who thought that an alliance with our country would set the seal of peace on the land. In this he was mistaken, as we know, for as cruel a war as was ever waged followed not long after; but it was through no fault of the princess, who did all she could, poor lady. She did not receive much

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kindness at the hands of the King, her husband, for, according to all accounts, he ever afterwards cursed the alliance into which he had entered by his marriage.

V

CHRISTINA OF DENMARK, NIECE OF CHARLES THE FIFTH; DUCHESS OF LORRAINE

AFTER the death of the Queen of Hungary there remained but one great princess on King Philip's side, and she was his cousin german, Madame la Duchesse de Lorraine, Christina of Denmark, to whom the title 'Her Highness' has since been given. She kept her cousin company for many years and greatly enhanced the brilliancy of his Court; for no court, whether of king, prince, emperor or monarch, is of much account unless it be presided over by an empress or a queen, and the manners of its gentlemen softened by the gentler manners of the maidens and matrons of a great princess.

This princess was one of the fairest and most accomplished that I have ever known. She had a charming face and a very agreeable way of speaking, and was in the habit of dressing exceedingly well, so that she set the fashion to all our ladies of France, as well as to her own. One hears of a head-dress *à la Lorraine*, and a veil *à la Lorraine*, both of which were articles of attire very becoming to our ladies.

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The duchess had the most beautiful hands that I have ever seen; I once spoke in praise of them to the Queen-Mother, and compared them to her own, which I have mentioned before as being exceptionally lovely. She sat a horse well, using the stirrups and saddle in a fashion she had learnt from her Aunt Marie. It is said that the Queen-Mother adopted the fashion from the duchess; in her earlier days she certainly used not to use stirrups and saddle, but when she did she presented a far more graceful figure on horseback. The duchess was proud of her horses, and always kept very fine ones in her stables; I have known her to have as many as twelve in constant use, all such splendid animals that it would have been hard to say which was the finest. Her Aunt Marie was very fond of her, finding her very much to her liking, both in respect of her passion for hunting and other outdoor exercises, and in respect of the virtues which she saw in her niece. After she was married, she often went to see her in Flanders, as I have heard from Madame de Fontaine.

When the duchess was left a widow, and especially after the loss of her son, she left Lorraine under somewhat melancholy circumstances and took up her residence with her uncle, the Emperor, and the Queens, her aunts, who were very glad to welcome her to their Courts.

She felt the loss and absence of her son greatly, in spite of all King Henri's fine excuses and assurances that he was only taking him away to adopt him as his own son. But she could not allay her

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suspensions, and having a further petition to make on behalf of M. de Le Brosse, whom she desired to have as governor, she proceeded on one memorable Maundy Thursday to pay a visit to King Henri. She found him in the great gallery at Nancy, where all the Court was assembled, and came to him in all her loveliness, without fear or nervousness, and, without in any way abasing her pride, made him a deep obeisance. With tears in her eyes she begged him to treat her more fairly, and reproached him for what he had done in depriving her of the company of her son, who was like no one in the world to her and who certainly did not deserve such harsh treatment. She went on to say that she could think of nothing he had done to offend the King, and spoke with such sweet conviction that the King, who was never known to be discourteous to a lady, took pity on her, and it was not long before his pity was shared by all the princes who stood round him and had heard her speak.

The King replied, not in a long speech such as he is stated by Paradin in his 'History of France' to have made on this occasion, but shortly and to the point. He was never prolix, and, indeed, seldom spoke at any length at all; the shortest speeches and the briefest replies are ever more suitable for kings and rulers than long arguments and philosophical discourses.

The duchess could not but be consoled by what he said; he assured her that she had no cause whatever for anxiety and told her that he had summoned

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her son to his side for his own safety and not because he bore him any grudge; and, inasmuch as the youth was of French extraction, he could not be brought up in a better place than in the French Court, among Frenchmen, where he would associate with so many friends and relations. The King was careful, too, not to forget to add that the house of Lorraine was more indebted to the house of France than to any in Christendom, instancing the obligation of the Duke of Lorraine to France in respect of Duke Charles of Burgundy, who met his death before Nancy; for it was a matter of common knowledge that, but for France, Burgundy would have completely ruined the Duke of Lorraine and devastated his duchy. He also spoke of the way in which France had assisted Lorraine in her conquests of the Holy Land, of Jerusalem, and of the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily. He further assured the Duchess that it was not in his nature, nor was it any part of his ambition, to ruin or do away with the young prince, but only to succour him, as he had succoured the little Queen of Scotland, the Duke of Parma, and even Germany, a land so oppressed that it would have succumbed to the enemy but for the help of France.

But not all his fine words and specious arguments could avail to console the poor mother, nor make her trouble the easier to bear. After making the King another low bow, she withdrew to her apartments, the tears coursing down her cheeks. The King very courteously conducted her to the door of her room, and the next day, before she left, he again

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went to see her, and took farewell of her. She had gained nothing, and felt that she had seen the last of her dear son. She thereupon resolved to leave Lorraine and withdraw into Flanders, to be near her uncle, the Emperor, and her cousin, King Philip, with whom she remained until peace was made between the two Kings and the King of Spain had at last recrossed the sea and settled down again in his own kingdom.

From all that I have heard she herself took a very active part in the ratification of this peace, for the deputies from both kings, who had met together to negotiate it, after several days' discussion came to a complete deadlock, and were as hounds who have lost all scent of their prey. And she, actuated by instincts that were almost divine in their purity, and by true Christian motives, undertook to negotiate for them, and carried the whole thing through so skilfully that the result of the peace was an unmixed blessing to the whole world. Men said at the time that no one could have been better fitted for such a task, for she was shrewd and far-seeing, and a very capable administrator. Moreover, the King, her cousin, believed in her and trusted her implicitly, for he loved her dearly and greatly esteemed her virtues and high qualities.

On the loss of her son, she fell out with M. de Guise and M. le Cardinal, his brother, blaming them for having persuaded the King to take the child from her solely for their own ambition's sake. She had, some little time before, refused an offer of marriage from M. de Guise, saying haughtily that

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she would never consent to marry the cadet of a house to which she was already united by having married the eldest son. M. de Guise is supposed never to have forgiven the Duchess of Lorraine for this answer to his suit, although he need not have borne her such ill-will, for he lost nothing by not marrying her, seeing that he eventually espoused the daughter of a very illustrious house, and a granddaughter of Louis XII., one of the best and bravest kings that has ever worn the crown of France ; she was, moreover, a very beautiful woman indeed.

From what I have heard, it appears that when these two princesses first met, they looked at each other so long, and made such a careful study of each other from all points of view, that it seemed as though they would never have done. I leave you to imagine the thoughts that filled the minds of the two fair ladies on the occasion of their meeting. Both were equally beautiful, except that, if anything, the beauty of Madame de Guise slightly surpassed that of the duchess, but in elegance and dignity the latter was more than her equal, for Madame de Guise had the sweetest and humblest nature of any woman I have ever known.

Her Highness of Lorraine was, on the other hand, haughty and proud, perhaps even somewhat arrogant, in her manner. I have seen her on several occasions in company with the Queen of Scotland, who paid her a visit at Lorraine after the death of her husband ; it almost seemed, from

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her manner, that her Highness thought herself the equal of her Majesty the Queen. But the latter knew her own position too well to allow their relations to become too friendly or intimate. She was the apt pupil of her uncle, the cardinal, in this; he had always been careful to teach her what was due to her birth and her high position.

The duchess died a year after she received the news that she had become Queen of Denmark. Before she died she altered the title of Highness, which she had borne for so many years, to that of Majesty, which only belonged to her for the short period of six months. She was glad of the honour of being able to style herself Queen before she died, but I have heard it said that she was from the first resolved never to enter her kingdom. She spent the remainder of her days at Tortonne, in Italy, and the people of the district never called her anything but Madame de Tortonne. She had lived long among them, not only in fulfilment of certain vows that she had made to the deity of the place, but also in order that she might be near some famous baths in the vicinity, which were beneficial to her gout, from which she was a great sufferer.

She was devoted to pious and holy works, and was well known for her charity and almsgiving; especially good was she to poor widows, among whom we may mention poor Madame Castellane of Milan, who would so miserably have dragged out the last remnant of her days at Court had it not been for the kindness of Madame de Tortonne

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and some slight help afforded her by the Queen-Mother.

This is all I shall say, in this short account, on the subject of this great princess; I hope I have shown how very wisely and discreetly she comported herself after the death of her husband, when she was left a very beautiful young widow. It is true that she might be said to have been twice married: first with the Duke Sforce, who died before they had been married a year, leaving her a widow of some fifteen years, and later, with the Duke of Lorraine. But she was not long left in the enjoyment of the company of her second husband, for he died when she was still quite young; and the many years of her life that remained to her she consecrated to a chaste and lonely widowhood.

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